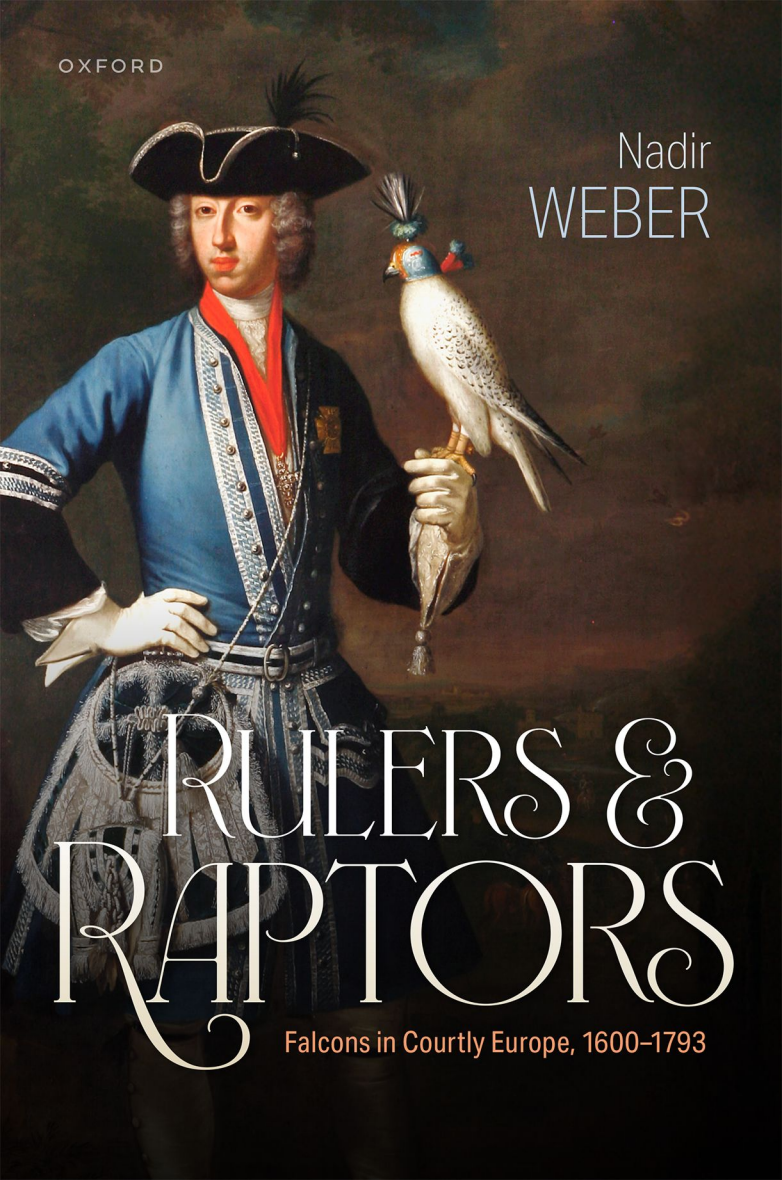
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To Nadine, Valentin, and Philomena

Acknowledgements

This book is the result of a long intellectual journey. It began with a visit to an exhibition of the work of the contemporary artist Walton Ford in Berlin in the spring of 2010. I was fascinated by Ford's way of depicting human–animal encounters in the past in large-scale paintings and in a style reminiscent of nineteenth-century zoological illustrations, which encouraged visitors to reflect on the history of animals, human views of them, and our past and present relationships with them. I familiarized myself with the then relatively limited literature on human–animal relations in the early modern period and took part in exchanges within the human–animal studies networks that were then just beginning to emerge in the German-speaking area. I would therefore like to thank my colleagues in the networks Forum Tiere und Geschichte and Cultural and Literary Animal Studies (CLAS) for many stimulating conversations, which encouraged me to pursue my interest and to begin a postdoctoral project in 2014 on animals at early modern princely courts.

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Bern, May 2025

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List of Abbreviations

AAE	Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Paris-La Courneuve
AN	Archives nationales, Paris
AVA	Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv, Vienna
BHO	British History Online, https://www.british-history.ac.uk/
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
DNA	Danish National Archives, Copenhagen
Fasz.	Faszikel
GStAPK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem
HHStA	Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna
HStAD	Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden
HStAM	Landesarchiv Hessen, Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg
HStAS	Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart
LNRWD	Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Abteilung Rheinland, Duisburg
NLM	National Library of Malta, Valletta
OÖLA	Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Linz
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, London

Note to the Reader

This book provides a history of courtly falconry and the human–animal relations associated with it in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Written for a general academic readership, it avoids the technical jargon of falconry as much as possible. The species of birds of prey mentioned in the historical sources cannot always be identified with certainty. Where there is evidence of this, I will indicate the species accordingly, otherwise I will use the generic term of falcon or more generally raptors or birds of prey. The term hawk, which can be used in English colloquial language for both *Accipitridae* and *Falconidae*, will be avoided unless the birds in question are goshawks, sparrowhawks, and the like. I will use personal pronouns such as 'who' and 'his' or 'her' (if the sex is known) when dealing with individual birds as protagonists—just as early modern falconry treatises did. When speaking more generally about the actions and experiences of animals, I will use a more 'neutral' terminology. Foreign-language quotations are translated into modern English. The original source citations and additional figures and data are provided in a separate 'Supplementary Materials' document, which is available on the University of Bern's Open Repository Portal, https://doi.org/10.48620/88108.

Introduction

The Multispecies Court

One day in 1794, the amateur taxidermist Joseph Natterer (1754–1823) moved his personal collection of animal specimens from his former residence in Laxenburg to Vienna. There he presented the collection of carefully stuffed mammals, birds, and reptiles to the Holy Roman Emperor, Francis II, for which he received a financial reward and was appointed the first custodian of the ruler's newly established 'animal cabinet'.[1] Natterer's sons, Joseph junior and Johann Baptist, later followed in their father's footsteps. Collecting taxidermies from all over the world, they laid the foundations for the zoological collection in the modern Natural History Museum of Vienna.[2] Most of Joseph Natterer senior's animal specimens that had formed the basis of this remarkable scholarly family enterprise originated in Lower Austria. One item, however, was decisively more exotic: the large white Nordic gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) that was later assigned number 48069 in the museum's bird inventory (Figure 0.1). How had this raptor come into the hands of a late eighteenth-century Austrian villager?

A closer look at Joseph Natterer senior's prior professional career provides a decisive clue. In 1772, at the age of eighteen, he had entered the service of the imperial falconry in Laxenburg as a 'falconer boy' (*Falkner-Jung*). A few years later, he was promoted to a 'mounted falconer' (*berittener Falkonier*) and received an annual income of 420 Reichsthaler until the closure of the falconry in autumn 1793.[3] Thus, for over twenty years, Natterer had been responsible for the daily care and training of hunting raptors like the white female Nordic gyrfalcon, the preferred choice for the hunt on herons and red and black kites. The decision to preserve for posterity the remains of this and two other gyrfalcons—numbers 48068 and 48072 in the inventory—may have been due to Natterer's personal interests in natural history, but it is also possible that he had done this on behalf of his ruler. As a visitor to the Austrian Habsburg's hunting lodge at Laxenburg had noted already in 1730, the emperor's chamber was filled not only with large paintings of hunting scenes but also 'various curious stuffed birds and animals'.[4]

[1] Pelzeln, 'Geschichte der Säugethier- und Vogelsammlung', p. 503.
[2] Schmutzer, *Der Liebe zur Naturgeschichte halber*, esp. pp. 16–19.
[3] HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 2 (1772), no. 45; ibid. 858, Fasz. 20 (1790), no. 60; ibid. 859, Fasz. 23 (1793), no. 44.
[4] Küchelbecker, *Allerneuste Nachricht* (1730), p. 802.

Figure 0.1 Stuffed specimen of a white female gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), *c.*1793
Source: Natural History Museum of Vienna, bird collection, inv. no. 48069, photo by A. Schumacher.

Thanks to Natterer's innovative taxidermy technique, the three white gyrfalcons—prepared with metal wires, dried moss, and glass eyes—are among the few pre-nineteenth-century falcon specimens to have survived to the present day. Their plumage contains important information about the birds' origins and lives.[5] The falcons belong to a subspecies of the *Falco rusticolus* that breeds only in the Arctic zone. Moreover, they all died at an early age of between one and three years. Such fragmentary information become elements of a collective biography when combined with a written, pictorial, and material sources. Hatched in Greenland and captured in Iceland, the three birds had been among the hundreds of gyrfalcons that served as diplomatic gifts among European courts. When they arrived at Laxenburg, they became part of a new multispecies social environment and were trained to bring down herons and kites in front of the assembled elites. Our three objects of natural history, therefore, offer insights into some of the last animal protagonists of the second golden age of falconry in Europe.

This book aims to show that an in-depth study of the lives of falcons and other animals can shed new light on the functioning of early modern courts and their place in society. It will argue that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, falconry was much more than only a hunting technique with trained raptors. It also served as a model for the mutual empowerment of the sovereign and his noble subjects—the essence of the Baroque style of government that gave rise to Europe's court society. Moreover, the reconstruction of the lives of courtly falcons brings to the stage the various men and women who interacted with these animals, from the falcon catchers in Iceland and Malta to the courtly falconers and rulers in Vienna and Versailles. Adopting a bird's-eye view, this study will present a new picture of European court life and its place in early modern society.

0.1 Animal History and Court Studies

Animals that lived at princely courts have long been disregarded as anecdotal objects of *petite histoire* as serious academic historians analysed the rise and fall of monarchical absolutism. In recent years, however, past societies' interactions with non-human living beings have begun to attract growing scholarly attention. In close methodological exchange with the interdisciplinary field of Human–Animal Studies, animal history has established itself as a distinct research field with its own networks, book series, and academic journals. While the early pioneering studies of the 1980s focused primarily on cultural representations of animals in history, the more recent 'animal turn' has also led to a growing interest

[5] My information on the bird specimens is based on the museum's inventory, kindly provided by Hans-Martin Berg, and on a private communication from Anita Gamauf (1962–2018).

in the changing practices of human–animal interaction.[6] Animals no longer appear as part of a purportedly timeless nature, but as other beings whose copresence, cooperation, or competition with humans shaped a past that now appears as a long history of entangled coevolutions.[7]

Unlike animals, princely courts are a classic subject of historiographical research. Yet it took the methodological innovations of social and cultural history to transform court studies into an international research field with a pan-European or even global comparative perspective. From the 1990s onwards, historical research has largely detached itself from the former paradigm of royal absolutism and instead emphasized the cooperative relationship between early modern rulers and their elites.[8] With the insights into the power of informal networks in early modern monarchies, once neglected agents such as women, subaltern servants, and short-time visitors have come into view. In addition, there has been a growing interest in the relationships between courts and the rise of a 'courtly public' in Europe.[9] Finally, studies on the global history of dynastic rule have revealed that similar political-social structures can be observed in premodern Europa, Asia, and Africa.[10]

These recent historiographical developments have increasingly brought into focus the horses, dogs, and other animals that lived at early modern courts. Indeed, princely courts play an important role in studies on the history of individual animal species and animal-related institutions. Thus, hardly any history of pets, exotic animals, stud farming, or hunting parks can do without discussing examples from princely courts.[11] From a court-historical perspective, studies on the animal presence and its organization and cultural representation at the papal court in Rome, the Medici court in Florence, the Spanish royal court, and especially the French royal court have been published in recent years.[12] However,

[6] Ritvo, 'On the Animal Turn'; Weil, 'A Report on the Animal Turn'. An important milestone on the road to a new animal history was the six-volume *Cultural History of Animals*, edited by Linda Kalof and Brigitte Resl in 2007. On recent developments in animal history, see, among others, Krüger/Steinbrecher/Wischermann, eds, *Tiere und Geschichte*; Fudge, *Quick Cattle and Dying Wishes*, p. xviii; Roscher/Krebber/Mizelle, eds, *Handbook of Historical Animal Studies*. On the interdisciplinary field of Human–Animal Studies, see, e.g., DeMello, *Animals and Society*, and Kalof, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*.

[7] Russell, 'Coevolutionary History'; Hüntelmann et al., 'Introduction'.

[8] See, e.g., Asch/Birke, eds, *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility*; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*; and for recent discussions, Griffey, ed., *Early Modern Court Culture*.

[9] Bauer, 'Strukturwandel der höfischen Öffentlichkeit'.

[10] Duindam/Artan/Kunt, eds, *Royal Courts*; Duindam, *Dynasties*.

[11] For overviews on animals in the early modern period, see, e.g., Fudge, ed., *Renaissance Beasts*; Boehrer, ed., *A Cultural History of Animals in the Renaissance*; Senior, ed., *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Enlightenment*; Cuneo, ed., *Animals and Early Modern Identity*; Cockram/Wells, eds, *Interspecies Interactions*.

[12] Paravicini Bagliani, *Le bestiaire du Pape*; Groom, *Exotic Animals*; Gómez-Centurión Jiménez, *Alhajas para soberanos*; Milovanovic, *La princesse Palatine*; Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*; Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*; Pieragnoli, *Le prince et les animaux*; Maral/Milovanovic, eds, *Les animaux du roi*. For the English court, some more specific case studies are available: see,

there has been little methodological dialogue between animal history and court history to date. A starting point for such a discussion, which promises to change both our view of human–animal relations and of the early modern court, might be two concepts at the intersection of the debates in the two fields of study: taming and domestication.

The debate about whether the court was a kind of taming and domestication institution for the noble elites goes back to the publication of *The Court Society* by the German–Jewish sociologist Norbert Elias in 1969.[13] According to Elias, the court thus played a pioneering role in what he called the 'civilizing process'. Elias' interpretations stimulated the emergence of the new, interdisciplinary field of court studies, but soon also provoked fundamental criticism from historians.[14] They have pointed out that nobles were able to spend a large part of their time away from the court and profit significantly from the resources of the crown through their quasi-hereditary offices as well as through patronage relations. Notwithstanding this historical criticism and revision, *The Court Society* continues to be part of the canon of the social and cultural history of early modern courts. While some historians have returned to Elias' original ideas of the court as a social figuration and a place of symbolic exchange, a debate has recently emerged around the role of agents that the self-declared 'human scientist' had almost completely ignored: animals.

In a case study on the French royal menageries, Peter Sahlins has suggested to revisit Elias' interpretation of Versailles as a model for the civilizing process by considering the symbolic lives of animals at court.[15] Challenging earlier interpretations that had denoted the menagerie as a 'theatre of the wild',[16] Sahlins has argued that King Louis XIV selected mainly peaceful and 'tame' animals such as demoiselle cranes and a number of other bird species for his *ménagerie* in Versailles which was completed in 1668. For Sahlins, the royal menagerie became a civilization model and a stage for the naturalized 'absolutism 2.0' that established itself through the symbolism of animals.[17] These interpretations have not gone uncontested. It has been pointed out that after the closure of the menagerie in Vincennes, a number of large predators were transferred to the alleged 'theatre of civility' precisely at the time when the court was settling permanently at

e.g., MacGregor, 'The Household out of Doors'. For a European-comparative perspective, see Hengerer/Weber, eds, *Animals and Courts*.

[13] It is noteworthy that in this book, Elias uses the term 'taming' rather casually (see *Die Höfische Gesellschaft*, pp. 254, 320, 338) and that of 'domestication' not at all. Later, Elias confirmed in an interview that the 'warriors were tamed, domesticated by the kings': Elias, *Autobiographisches und Interview*s, pp. 146–7. On Elias' work and its reception in historiography, see Opitz, ed., *Höfische Gesellschaft*.

[14] See Winterling, *Der Hof der Kurfürsten von Köln*; Duindam, *Myths of Power*. For a summary of the international debates, which merged with the debates on royal absolutism, see Asch, 'Hof, Adel und Monarchie'.

[15] Sahlins, 'The Royal Menageries'; Sahlins, *1668*, pp. 49–125.

[16] Baratay/Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo*, p. 48.

[17] Sahlins, *1668*, pp. 123, 237–8.

Versailles.[18] In a sense, the debate echoes the earlier discussions on Elias—as with the nobles, the tameness of courtly animals is questioned.

But what exactly is meant by 'tame' and 'domesticated'? From a zoological or ethological perspective, tameness and domesticity clearly refer to different kinds of animal relationships with humans. According to Heini Hediger's classical definition, a tamed animal is an animal in captivity that no longer shows 'flight tendency' in interaction with humans.[19] An important step in this process is the acceptance of food in presence of humans and the adaptation to a changed social and material environment. In contrast, the concept of domestication refers to species—or rather populations—that have developed under human supervision.[20] In extreme cases of breeding or artificial selection, these animals develop morphological and behavioural characteristics that no longer allow them to survive without human care and protection. Based on a certain degree of familiarity with the caretaker, both tamed and domesticated animals can be trained by humans to perform, on demand, certain actions that are usually based on their behavioural repertoire.[21]

Across different fields of the humanities, scholars have become interested in adapting such concepts and empirical insights from zoological research. The French anthropologist Jean-Pierre Digard has pointed out that the domestication of animals is never a completed process but should be considered as a 'continuous action, renewed and maintained every day'.[22] Other scholars such as Donna Haraway, one of the initiators of the 'animal turn' in cultural studies, have even suggested ways of conceptualizing human–animal interactions in a more symmetrical way, by attributing agency not only to humans. The long history of relationships between humans and wolves/dogs has been written as a history of cohabitation, coevolution, and 'co-constitution'.[23] In such cases, interspecies interactions are so deeply inscribed in bodies and brains that even animal behaviour should no longer be understood as a timeless constant controlled by natural instincts, but must also be regarded as historically variable, dependent on changing material and social conditions.[24]

From this perspective, it seems possible to describe the princely court as a place where the taming and domestication of animals—based on repeated interaction with individuals and populations—could or should take place. It was a

[18] Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, p. 247.
[19] Hediger, *Wild Animals in Captivity*, p. 155.
[20] Sánchez-Villegra, *The Process of Animal Domestication*, ch. 1, pp. 1–35.
[21] Hediger, *Wild Animals in Captivity*, p. 156.
[22] Digard, *L'homme et les animaux domestiques*, p. 81; Digard, 'Jalons pour une anthropologie de la domestication animale'.
[23] Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto*, pp. 6–7. For another approach, see Russell, *Greyhound Nation*. On the discussion of animal agency, see, among others, Despret, 'From Secret Agents to Interagency'; Wirth et al., eds., *Das Handeln der Tiere*; Roscher, 'Actors or Agents?'
[24] This opens perspectives for a 'historical ethology'. See Baratay, *Le point de vue animal*, p. 389.

part of the role of the horse trainers, hound boys, donkey drivers, falconers, leopard wardens, and 'trainers of the wild animals' who appear in the court lists to familiarize the animals in their care with human society and to train them in the desired behaviour.[25] And, as we shall see, such asymmetrical practices of human–animal interaction were also used as models or metaphors for the governance of human subjects.

However, taming and domestication do not describe all forms of human–animal relationships in the courtly context. As with the study of the nobility, a sole focus on this can even obscure the actual variance in the relationships and balance of power between humans and animals in a courtly context. Inspired by Rainer E. Wiedenmann's sociological theory of 'humanimal sociality' and the methodological approach of multispecies ethnography, I therefore propose to distinguish between different degrees of integration of non-human living beings and to describe their functions within a broader model of human–animal sociality: the multispecies court.[26]

In the early modern period, various meanings of the word 'court' existed side by side and received their exact meaning only in the context of act of speech or writing. 'The court' could refer to a seat of jurisdiction (*curia*) or a prince's residence, to the administrative centre of a monarchy as a whole, or even to the totality of household officials who were in the service of the sovereign and his or her family (*Maison du Roi* or *Hofstaat*).[27] Yet, the most general understanding of a princely court combined a spatial with a social component: the court was considered to be the 'house' where the sovereign, his family, and their dependents stayed.[28] This house was materialized in princely residences that were often surrounded by enclosed gardens and parks. It was not only humans who circulated there, but also animals, surrounded by plants. From an animal history perspective, the court can be characterized as an enclosed social space or ecosystem that was inhabited by a wide variety of living beings.

In a certain sense, those humans and animals who stayed at a princely court were literally 'domesticated', as they came to be seen as belonging to the princely *domus*. In contrast to true *domestiques*, however, the noble office holders only had to be present at the court for a certain period of time and could always give

[25] On such offices at the court of Emperor Rudolf II, see Hausenblasovà, *Der Hof Kaiser Rudolfs II.*, pp. 369, 427–8, 441, 449–50.

[26] See Wiedenmann, *Tiere, Moral und Gesellschaft*; Kirksey/Helmreich, 'The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography'. In contrast to the views that see the presence of animals at court as a sort of parallel society (Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*; Sahlins, *1668*; Farinelli, 'A Beastly Court'), this approach emphasizes the integration of animals into court society itself. For the conceptual discussion, see also Weber, 'Das Bestiarium'.

[27] See Evans, 'The Court'; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, pp. 3–20; Duindam, *Dynasties*, pp. 157–8.

[28] Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, p. 3. On the wide concepts of the 'house' as a social space in the early modern period, see Eibach/Lanzinger, eds, *The Routledge History of the Domestic Sphere*.

up their responsibilities without losing their social rank.[29] It is probably no coincidence that by the end of the seventeenth century, the adjective 'domestic' was associated first with servants who worked for money and second with dogs and other 'domestic animals'.[30] Both were members of a lord's house and both had a subordinate status in this sphere of cohabitation. Close coexistence therefore by no means implied equality. On the contrary, the coordinated interaction of highly unequal actors characterized the early modern princely court and made it a model for the wider society.

In court studies, integration has been proposed as an alternative concept to domestication, because it allows us to compare the different degrees of agents' entanglement with the sovereign's house and reflects their interest in participating or not in a social system that promised considerable resources but implied an acceptance of the rules of conduct set out in court ceremonial.[31] To a certain extent, these considerations can also be applied to animals. Although they did not enter the court of their own free will, their willingness to cooperate remained a crucial factor in their status and the permanence of their presence. Following the zoological concepts mentioned above, two levels of integration can be distinguished: the processual integration of individual animals into the courtly ecosystem, and the permanent integration of certain groups of animals that were kept at court for specific purposes and reproduced under human supervision.

The social and moral status that court animals attained in this system depended largely on the density of their interactions with courtiers, and especially with the ruler. Rainer E. Wiedenmann has observed a 'double animal morality' at early modern courts, in which 'in-group animals' such as lapdogs and riding horses enjoyed excessive privileges, while 'out-group animals', which Wiedenmann counts in hunting game, were killed en masse by the rulers and their courtiers.[32] Wiedenmann ignores the fact that game was under the sovereign's extensive protection, but points to an important analogy with the position of human members of the court. The princely court was characterized by intense face-to-face interaction that established and perpetuated social hierarchies in daily life.[33] Permanent and visible presence at court promised participation in offices, honours, and material resources. In the French monarchy, it was therefore the high

[29] See Hengerer, *Kaiserhof und Adel*, pp. 23, 107, who therefore speaks of a 'virtual court' of office holders that is to be distinguished from the totality of those actually present at the court.

[30] See *Dictionnaire de l'Academie française*, vol. 1 (1694), 'domestique'. See also Digard, *L'homme et les animaux domestiques*, p. 24.

[31] Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, p. 319; see also the definition of integration by Schlögl, *Anwesende und Abwesende*, p. 137, and on the function of court ceremonial, Füssel, 'Fest–Symbol–Zeremoniell'.

[32] Wiedenmann, *Tiere, Moral und Gesellschaft*, pp. 360–77.

[33] Duindam, 'The Court as a Meeting Point'; Schlögl, 'Der frühneuzeitliche Hof als Kommunikationsraum'.

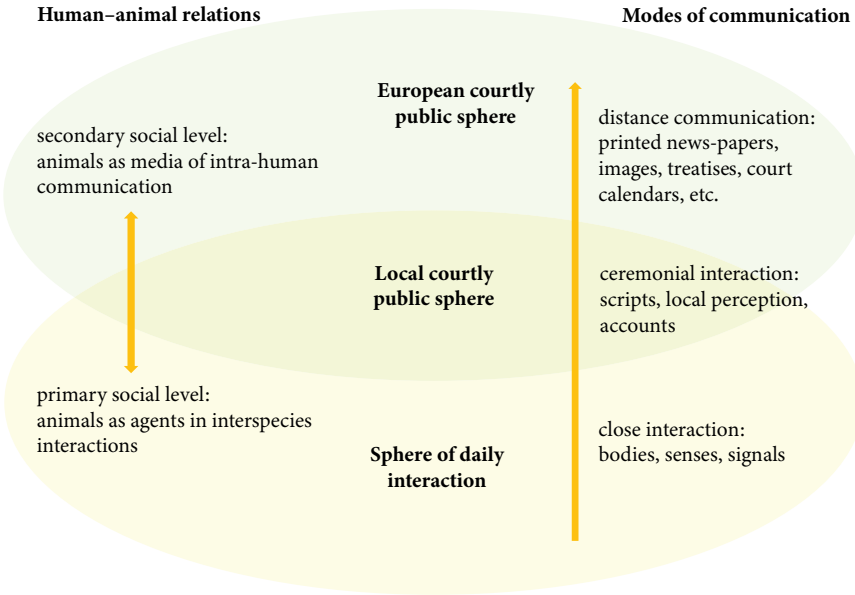
Human–animal relations
Modes of communication
European courtly public sphere
secondary social level: animals as media of intra-human communication
distance communication: printed news-papers, images, treatises, court calendars, etc.
Local courtly public sphere
ceremonial interaction: scripts, local perception, accounts
primary social level: animals as agents in interspecies interactions
close interaction: bodies, senses, signals
Sphere of daily interaction

Figure 0.2 Interspecies sociality and the European court society
Source: By the author.

nobility that, to some extent, 'domesticated' itself after 1660 by occupying the same court offices over generations.[34]

Animals cannot be regarded as autonomous players in this power game, of which they could hardly have been aware. They were, however, part of this inner courtly space of bodily interaction that—from a Human–Animal Studies perspective—can also be described as a primary level of 'humanimal sociality' (Figure 0.2).[35] In this figuration of interactions and interdependences, certain groups of animals could even assume a dominant role in courtly sub-figurations such as the royal stables or kennels. In that case, both the spatial order and material equipment as well as the role profiles of the human caretakers were oriented towards the needs of these extremely expensive animals. Since even the superior noble office holders in the royal stables were ultimately dependent on the animals' cooperation, the 'balance of power' was by no means oriented solely in favour of the humans.[36] With regard to these interactions, the court can therefore also be more broadly defined as 'a social figuration of interdependent and communicating living beings grouped around the person of a ruler'.[37]

[34] Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones*. On court nobility in Austria, see Hengerer, *Kaiserhof und Adel*.
[35] On the terminology, see Wiedenmann, *Tiere, Moral und Gesellschaft*, esp. pp. 105–7; Weber, 'Das Bestiarium'.
[36] In the sense of Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, pp. 11, 37, 55; Elias, *Was ist Soziologie?*, p. 70.
[37] Weber, 'Das Bestiarium', p. 32.

The early modern princely court also provided a stage on which sovereigns and noblemen performed their social status in front of exterior observers.[38] These were partly the prince's subjects, addressed through occasional public ceremonies and printed texts and images, but mainly foreign fellow princes and courts. As recent research has shown, early modern court society was not so much a national society centred on a kingdom's court. Rather, it was a transnational phenomenon built on the Europe-wide kinship relations of princely and noble houses—the society of princes[39]—and mediated via letters, printed gazettes, and other media of distance communication that spread throughout Europe from the sixteenth century onwards. Life at court, documented in detail in pictures and texts, thus always addressed a 'courtly public' that was spread all over Europe.[40] Over time, this virtual sphere of media communication increasingly replaced the interactive sphere of face-to-face communication as a space for political and social integration—which was to form the basis of the critique of the court as a rather useless and, above all, expensive theatre of representation in enlightened bourgeois criticism.

On this representative and mediated level, animals were not agents in their own right either. Nevertheless, they were heavily involved in the staging of princely power, be it as living mounts and companions in processions and festivities, or as described or painted attributes of courtly splendour. In addition, there was an intense gift exchange with animals between the courts of Europe and partly even beyond.[41] In such cases, animals served as media of communication, observed by courtiers, diplomats, and readers of newspapers, which is why the representational success also strongly depended on the behaviour of the animals involved. With regard to early modern courts, the level of interaction and the level of representation were therefore seldom strictly separate spheres of humanimal sociality but were related and had a reciprocal effect on each other. In any case, as interacting beings, living media and status symbols in the sphere of the sovereign, animals played a considerable role in the construction of European court society.

0.2 Animals at Court: Species, Spaces, Roles

What kinds of animals lived at early modern royal courts, and what were their roles and living conditions? In the following brief overview, I propose to distinguish six distinct but partly overlapping groups of courtly animals according to

[38] Gunn/Janse, eds, *The Court as a Stage*.
[39] In the sense of Bély, *La société des princes*; Krischer, 'Souveränität als sozialer Status'.
[40] Bauer, 'Strukturwandel der höfischen Öffentlichkeit'.
[41] See Weber, 'Diplomatic History', and the works quoted therein.

their degree of integration into the courtly space of interaction and the nature of their practical and symbolic functions: a core group of *princely agents*—horses and hunting dogs—that were seen as pillars of court life; *chamber animals* that lived closed to rulers and courtiers; exotic *display animals* that embodied the power and global connections of the prince; *park animals* most of which were raised to die in princely hunts; *farm animals* that discreetly supplied the court with food; and unwelcomed animal inhabitants or *gate-crashers* that could challenge the whole machine of representation.

Princely agents: At the centre of the courtly figuration of nonhuman creatures were animals that performed certain publicly visible roles in everyday court life and for ceremonial occasions. This group includes riding and coach horses and other equids (mules and donkeys) as well as dogs and trained birds of prey, the 'animal trinity' of rulers and nobles since the Medieval age.[42] While the hounds and raptors were primarily used in the princely hunt, horses played a variety of roles in the court's mobility, military activities, hunting, and ceremonies.[43] In public entrances, the *Leibpferde* virtually merged with the royal body; at princely funerals, so-called mourning horses and horses of joy even acted as living symbols of the deceased and the new sovereign.[44] And in courtly performances such as the equestrian ballet held for the marriage of Emperor Leopold I at the Vienna Hofburg in January 1667, the close interspecies interaction between courtiers and horses became iconic moments of dynastic rule (Figure 0.3).[45]

Around this highly visible core group of princely animals, extensive courtly sub-organizations developed that were responsible for their acquisition, accommodation, and training. All larger courts counted among their top office holders noble chief stable masters, masters of the hunt, and masters of the hawks who commanded dozens or even hundreds of courtly office holders, servants, and animals. At the end of Louis XV's reign, for instance, the *grand écuyer* and the *premier écuyer* at the French royal Court of Versailles were in charge of more than 1,700 horses and *circa* 1,400 people—from riding masters to musicians—attached to the *Grande* and *Petite Écurie*.[46] More than a thousand hunting dogs lived in the immediate vicinity of the king's residence in the *Grand Chenil* (Grand kennel) and other dog stables, managed by numerous staff under the direction of the *grand veneur*.[47] At the emperor's court, some of the hunting dogs lived in the *Rüdenhaus*

[42] See Paravicini, 'Gab es eine einheitliche Adelskultur Europas im späten Mittelalter', p. 405, referring to Johan Huizinga who mentioned a 'trinity…of horse, dog, and falcon'.

[43] See, among others, Raber/Tucker, eds, *The Culture of the Horse*; Roche, *La gloire et la puissance*; Edwards/Enenkel/Graham, eds, *The Horse as Cultural Icon*; Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*; Landry/Mansel, eds, 'Horses and Courts'.

[44] Brückner, 'Ross und Reiter im Leichenzeremoniell'; Bayreuther, *Pferde und Fürsten*, pp. 181–8.

[45] See Haider-Prengler, 'Das Rossballett im inneren Burghof zu Wien'; Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Triumphall Shews*, esp. 95–101; Franchet d'Espèrey, 'The Ballet d'Antoine de Pluvinel'; Papiro, *Choreographie der Herrschaft*.

[46] Reytier, 'Un service de la Maison du roi', pp. 65–6, 75.

[47] Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, pp. 587–629, here p. 587.

Abbildung deß Tempels der Ewigkeit, sambt der Römischen Kayserl. May: sehr Prächtigsten Auffzugs, mit dem wagen der Glori, vnd 12. vor
trefflichster auß staffirten Cavallieren, vorstellende so viel Genios so vieller vom hochlöblichen Erz-hauß Oesterreich, die Zeit here biß auff die Jetzt
allerhöchst löblichsten Regierende Kayserl: May: gewesene Römische Kayser: Ruhmerlichster begehung deß sehr Künst- vnd Zierlichsten Reü Balletts, welcher
sambt den andern Rittern von den 4 Elementen In Wien innerhalb der Kayserl. burg auff dem Platz gehalten worden ist, so geschehen im January. 1667.

Figure 0.3 Equestrian ballet in the courtyard of the Vienna Hofburg in January 1667, copperplate engraving, *c.*1667. The magnificent equestrian ballet, performed on 24 and 31 January, was the highlight of the elaborate wedding celebrations for the young emperor. A detailed description of the choreography and scenes was printed in advance and distributed to the spectators. The idealized depiction shows the interspecific team play of courtiers and horses in perfect harmony.
Source: Wien Museum, inv. no. 19713.

in Erdberg some kilometres away from the Hofburg.[48] Close to the ruler or not, these animals were the reason for many court officials to be at court and served as a means of elite integration.

For most of these hounds and horses, the courts also directly or indirectly served as breeding places. While the princely hunting dogs largely reproduced in their packs, of which some had their own glorious genealogies,[49] a large proportion of the court's horses came from royal studs that could be located at a considerable distance from the residence, such as Lipizza in Sežana (in present-day Slovenia) and Kladruby in Bohemia in the case of the imperial court in Vienna. Other representative horses were also acquired on the international horse market or arrived as gifts from foreign princes.[50] All horses and hunting dogs, as the

[48] Laichmann, *Die kaiserlichen Hunde*.
[49] Rupp, 'Les chiens blancs du Roy'.
[50] Mulliez, *Les chevaux du royaume*; Handler/Lessing, *Die Spanische Hofreitschule*; Roche, *La gloire et la puissance*, pp. 264–5; Bayreuther, 'Pferde in der Diplomatie'.

falcons, had their individual names, lived in specific boxes or rooms, were recorded in lists, and were sometimes even immortalized in portraits.[51] Given their omnipresence, it was thus impossible for early modern observers to imagine life at court without these princely animals, even if some courts outsourced breeding or hunting activities to places outside the capital.

Chamber animals: Some companion animals even interacted much more closely with the rulers and lived in the inner space. They were therefore also referred to as chamber animals (*Cammerhundt*, *oiseaux du cabinet*, etc.) by contemporaries.[52] This category includes numerous lapdogs belonging to both female and male members of the ruling dynasties and selected members of the court nobility. Princess Elizabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate, duchesse d'Orléans (1652–1722), the sister-in-law of the Sun King, always kept a pack of up to nine dwarf spaniels as well as canary birds and cats in her rooms and even allowed some of these animals to sleep in her bed.[53] Louis XIV's favourite dogs slept at a slightly greater distance, two doors away from his bedchamber in their own *cabinet des chiens du roi*, but had the special privilege of being fed by the king himself.[54] Frederick II of Prussia (1712–1786) even wanted to be buried with his personal greyhounds, whom he described as his only true friends.[55]

Given these semantics of affection, the courtly chamber animals often serve as proof of the portrayed person's special love of animals in popular biographies of early modern rulers. At court, however, these chamber animals not only reflected the ruler's emotional isolation, which they were intended to alleviate, but could also serve to demonstrate the sovereign's power to distribute his favours freely and to make others wait. Moreover, they could help to establish patronage and friendship ties on which political and social power was based.[56] Chamber servants such as the 'governess of the king's little dogs and guenon' were able to make use of the closeness to the ruler and his family for personal concerns, and the breeders of the king's favourite dogs had reasons to hope that they would not to be forgotten.[57] In short, pets mattered in early modern court politics.

Display animals: Princely courts have also always been important places for the display of exotic animals. Since the late fifteenth century, elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, and parrots increasingly reached Europe as diplomatic gifts or objects

[51] On the names, see, e.g., Maral/Milovanovic, *Les animaux du roi*, p. 207; on early modern animal portraits, Pinault Sørensen, 'Portraits of Animals, 1600–1800', and Fémelat, 'Rubino'.

[52] See Scheichl, 'Cammerhundt', esp. pp. 57–8; MacDonogh, *Reigning Cats and Dogs*; Gómez-Centurión Jiménez, 'Chamber Animals'; Weber, '*Je suis au Roy*'.

[53] Milovanovic, *La princesse Palatine*, esp. pp. 23–42.

[54] Ibid., p. 47.

[55] This wish was ignored after his death in 1786, but was fulfilled in 1991. See Preußen/Preußen, *Die Liebe des Königs*, p. 8.

[56] Teuscher, 'Hunde am Fürstenhof', pp. 359–64. On the emotional language associated with courtly pets, see Cockram, 'Sleeve Cat and Lap Dog', and the section 'Coded Emotions' in Hengerer/Weber, eds, *Animals and Courts*.

[57] Milovanovic, *La princesse Palatine*, pp. 48, 96.

Figure 0.4 The menagerie of Versailles, engraving by Nicolas de Poilly, late seventeenth century. The centrepiece of the Versailles Menagerie, created for King Louis XIV by the architect Louis Le Vau, was an octagonal pavilion with a viewing platform. The animals, imported from North Africa, Asia, and the Americas, lived in the enclosed courtyards and cages built around it. The architecture of this early modern zoo was widely admired in courtly Europe, but the practical aspects of keeping exotic animals proved challenging
Source: Universitätsbibliothek Bern, MUE Ryh 2619:21 A.

of trade from overseas colonial territories. At the Italian princely courts, *serraglios* were built for such exotic animals; from the seventeenth century onwards, the menagerie of Versailles, constructed between 1662 and 1668, would serve as a model throughout Europe (Figure 0.4).[58] The animals kept in the royal menageries served different purposes. Large mammals and colourful birds attracted attention and were painted, described in writing, and studied scientifically. Tigers, bears, and other 'ferocious beasts' were set on each other in animal combats before the courtly public. In less bloody everyday life, exotic animals were admired by courtiers and visitors and supported royal representation as living symbols for the ruler's power and global connections.

[58] Loisel, *Histoire des ménageries*; Iriye, 'Le Vau's Ménagerie'; Baratay/Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo*, pp. 15–54; Paust, *Studien zur barocken Menagerie*; Mabille/Pieragnoli, *La ménagerie de Versailles*; Belozerskaya, *The Medici Giraffe*; Pérez de Tudela/Jordan Gschwend, 'Renaissance Menageries'; Sahlins, 'The Royal Menageries'; Plumb, *The Georgian Menagerie*; Groom, *Exotic Animals*, ch. 2.

However, the mortality rate in princely menageries was high; often the once precious creatures were soon reduced to objects of naturalistic interest.[59] Since reproduction on site hardly ever took place, diplomatic gifts were of an occasional nature, and animals that were ordered from purchasers often died on the way, the composition of the menageries remained fluid and had little in common with the systematic structure of modern zoological gardens.[60] Due to their often unattractive state of health or the smell of their excrement, the menagerie animals were also sometimes kept at a certain distance, such as in the case of Schönbrunn.[61] Probably for the same reasons, some menageries—such as Versailles between 1715 and 1722—temporarily closed their doors, whereas others were never even realized.[62] Exotic animals were powerful symbols, but they could also reveal weaknesses.

Park animals: Some of the animals that could move more or less freely in the castle parks were of exotic origin, too. The fallow deer and pheasants that lived at many courts in the early modern period, for example, were originally imported from Asia and could hardly have survived in Western European ecosystems without special human protection and care.[63] Similarly, the large populations of red deer, roe deer, or partridges were able to reproduce better in parks and a domain's forests thanks to protection from enemies such as wolves, foxes, and human poachers and because they were fed in the winter by courtly foresters.[64] Most, if not all, of these park animals were subject to hunting. In some princely parks, such as that of Laxenburg near Vienna, such hunts took place only at certain times of the year when the court was there; in other places, such as Versailles, hunting was almost continuous, with dozens or even hundreds of animals being killed in a single day. To maintain the system of breeding and killing, game animals were sometimes deliberately moved from one park to another.[65]

Given these continuous human interventions, it does not seem appropriate to me to describe the princely hunts a confrontation of 'civilized' courtiers and hunting dogs with wild animals. Rather, courtly park animals were part of artificially created ecosystems, enclosed by fences, whose primary function was to provide enough huntable game animals of the desired size and quality. The hunting park was therefore—as I have argued elsewhere—a perfect experimental field for governmental biopolitics.[66] In such a context, the practice of hunting itself

[59] Guerrini, *The Courtiers' Anatomists*.
[60] Robbins, *Elephant Slaves*, pp. 9–36; Dittrich, 'Der Import von Wildtieren nach Europa'.
[61] Ash, ed., *Mensch, Tier und Zoo*, pp. 31–51; Giese, *Wiener Menagerien*.
[62] On the planned but never realized menageries in Schleissheim and Kassel, see Paust, *Studien zur barocken Menagerie*, pp. 148–51, 154–6.
[63] Sykes et al., 'Wild to Domestic and Back Again'; Hünemörder, '"Phasianus"', ch. 7; Weber, 'Zahmes Wild?'
[64] On the management of early modern princely hunting parks, see, in particular, Quenet, *Versailles*, and the contributions to Weber, ed., *Hege und Herrschaft*.
[65] Knoll, *Umwelt—Herrschaft—Gesellschaft*, pp. 93–7.
[66] Weber, 'Sein zum Tode', pp. 26–32.

was seen less as an interaction with raw nature than as an exercise for war and as a ritual of killing that should express the power of the sovereign over life and death in his territory. At the same time, the protected status of game made it possible to extend territorial control to other parts of the monarchy. Rulers such as the dukes of Savoy used the game laws to combat poachers and other troublesome subjects.[67]

Farm animals: Princely courts required a large variety of animal products for their daily life. Milk, eggs, and above all enormous quantities of meat were consumed by the human and animal members of the court.[68] Since the shelf life of such animal products was limited, keeping farm animals in proximity was the preferred option. In addition to model farms such as the *Hameau de la Reine*, several large agricultural estates in the huge domain of Versailles supplied the court with grain and livestock.[69] Poultry and other animals destined for the table also lived in the menagerie, and even the carps swimming in the châteaux' ponds catered to the court. Practical requirements always mixed with the taste for the exquisite. For example, the Austrian Habsburgs purchased 'exotic' Swiss cows for their milk and meat supply.[70] If we include contracted suppliers, a network emerges that extended far beyond the courtly sphere, in which animals and animal products circulated for the purpose of feeding the court.[71]

Gate-crashers: While the animal groups mentioned so far give the impression of a diverse and complex, yet largely controlled, animal court life, the impression changes when we include uninvited or invasive animal co-inhabitants of the courtly space. The understudied yet ubiquitous presence is made clear by the fact that the French royal court's moving to Fontainebleau for several weeks each autumn was not only for hunting reasons, but was also used to clean the castle of Versailles and to get rid of mice and rats.[72] Other parasites even inhabited the bodies of princes and courtiers, multiplying rapidly thanks to the concentrated physical presence of humans and other animals.[73] The gardens and parks were not safe from uninvited guests either. To hunt the subterranean beasts that regularly destroyed the perfect symmetry of the royal gardens, the French court employed its own mole hunter (*taupier*), and rabbits, initially introduced for food supply, turned out to be a pest and were hunted by the park guards.[74]

[67] Farinelli, 'Hunting for Ambition'. For France, see Salvadori, *La chasse*, part IV.
[68] Perez, *La santé de Louis XIV*, pp. 227–8.
[69] Saule/Arminjon, eds, *Sciences & curiosités*, pp. 125–40; Quenet, *Versailles*, pp. 35–49.
[70] Scheichl, 'Cammerhundt', pp. 32–4.
[71] On the food supply of Versailles, see Abad, 'Aux origines du suicide de Vattel'; Abad, *Le grand marché*, esp. pp. 710–31; Da Vinha, *Le Versailles de Louis XIV*, pp. 65–96.
[72] Newton, *Hinter den Fassaden*, pp. 178–82.
[73] Perez, *La santé de Louis XIV*, pp. 226, 255; MacDonogh, *Reigning Cats and Dogs*, pp. 148–9; Bain, 'Irritating Intimates', pp. 84–5.
[74] Newton, *Versailles, côté jardins*, pp. 49–52.

The fight against invasive animals correlated with the aim to create a well-ordered society in the courtly sphere as a model for the whole monarchy. An illustrative example for the challenging transition between the two spheres is the fight against wolves. One day in 1704, the French dauphin hunted the 'enemy of mankind' from the residence's park walls, which the animal had overcome with a leap, throughout Île-de-France.[75] These hunts, organized by the *Grande Louveterie*, were intended to show the monarch as the protector of the people. However, repeated failures—such as the notoriously unsuccessful attempts to defeat the man-killing 'Beast of Gévaudan' in 1764–7—could also have the opposite effect, showing the subjects the limits of royal rule.[76] Such examples remind us that animals in early modern courts were not merely objects of human action but protagonists in their own right who could create confusion in the theatre of power.[77]

As this book on the rulers' raptors will show, such manifestations of negative and positive animal agency were not confined to the wild species that invaded the well-ordered court but were also part of its inner life. The typology of courtly animals just presented gives an idea of the wide range of animal species and roles from the perspective of the court. However, if we change the perspective and look more closely and follow the lives of the animals, conceptual boundaries such as those between wild and domesticated, free and captive, untamed and tamed, or working and companion animals become blurred again. We find birds of prey among the princely agents and among the protected park animals; some were of exotic origin, and some became gate-crashers who escaped the court. While the story of horses is one of ceremonial entrances, courtly festivities, and martial nobility, and that of dogs is one of loyalty, touch, and emotion, these strange, hooded creatures in Europe's power centres linked the strictly regulated sphere of the court with the infinity of the sky.

0.3 Falcons and the History of Falconry

Falcons are remarkable beings. Members of the 39 species that today are attributed to the *Falco* genus can be observed in almost every region of the world, from the Arctic north to Africa's deserts, from the steppes of Central Asia to the coasts of New Zealand.[78] Although their body structure and flight behaviour are similar, the size of falcons varies considerably between species and between smaller males

[75] See Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. X, p. 24, reporting a wolf hunt that took place on 25 May 1704 and led the son of King Louis XIV, Louis de France, called *Monseigneur*, 'far away' from Meudon.

[76] Smith, *Monsters of the Gévaudan*. See also Moriceau, *L'homme contre le loup*, and on the *Grande Louveterie*; Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, pp. 641–56.

[77] Persson, 'Unruly Display'.

[78] For an overview, see Ferguson-Lees/Christie, *Raptors of the World*, pp. 832–925. Specifically on gyrfalcons, see Potapov/Sale, *The Gyrfalcon*; on peregrine falcons, see White/Cade/Enderson, *Peregrine Falcons*.

and larger females. They range from male merlin falcons (*Falco columbarius*) with a wingspan of 50 centimetres and a weight of 165 grams to female gyrfalcons that reach 160 centimetres and weigh 2.1 kilograms (Figure 0.5). Accordingly, their natural prey varies from insects and small birds to ptarmigans and lemmings. Some of them stay in the same place for years, where they sit on their eyries, breed their offspring, and defend their territory by circling in the air. Others migrate thousands of kilometres to warmer regions every year, following their prey. Like many other birds, falcons are usually faithful to their mates, returning to the same breeding places year after year, communicating in the air with their high-pitched screams, and caring for their young in pairs. They do not live in large groups like crays and do not like crowded places like pigeons, but at the same time, they are highly cooperative, deeply social creatures.

Raptors live on meat. Unlike vultures and some other birds of prey, falcons and hawks avoid carrion and non-animal food, and hunt living prey instead. Goshawks and other hawks (*Accipitridae*) have rather short wings compared to their length and can track prey on the ground and in cluttered terrain such as forests. Falcons with their long and curved wings need more space and a clear view. They attack their prey from above, catch it with their claws, and kill with their tooth, the sharp end of their beak. Peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*)—the most widespread falcon species worldwide—can recognize potential prey such as a flying pigeon from a distance of up to 1,600 metres, even at dusk. They can sequence visual signals in their brains two times faster than humans. Gyrfalcons (*Falco rusticolus*), the biggest falcon species, can accelerate their flight to over 150 kilometres per hour when chasing their prey. Peregrine falcons have been recorded reaching speeds of over 350 kilometres per hour when diving to attack—the highest speed of any animal on earth, allowing them to immobilize or even kill prey on hit.

Their hunting abilities make falcons and hawks the perfect intelligent weapons for humans. Already more than four thousand years ago, people in the Middle East and Central Asia began to send out birds of prey for hunting.[79] With eagles and goshawks, they could hunt hares, foxes, or even deer in the countryside; with falcons, they could also bring birds down from the sky. In the global history of falconry, Western Europe was a latecomer. Hunting with trained birds of prey seems to have been unknown in ancient Greece and the Western Roman Empire; it probably arrived in Europe during the Migration Period. Viking graves containing the remains of birds of prey attest to a close relationship, both physical and symbolic, between birds of prey and members of the elite. In the time of the Crusades, new falconry expertise reached the European courts from the Arab world, where this hunting technique had already flourished for centuries. In the

[79] See esp. the recent synthesis by Gersmann/Grimm, eds, *Raptor and Human*, 4 vols.

Gyrfalcon
(Falco rusticolus)

Biology: The largest falcon in the world, with a wingspan of up to 160 cm and a weight of up to 2.1 kg. Breeds in the Arctic zone from North America to Greenland and the Russian tundra. The colour of its plumage varies from dark brown to white. The gyrfalcon prefers to feed on ptarmigan and small mammals.

History: Because of its size, strength and beauty, the gyrfalcon has been one of the favourite hunting birds of rulers throughout Eurasia since the Middle Ages. It was used to hunt big game such as cranes, herons, kites, and hares. For the common nobility, however, the Nordic raptor proved too expensive and too prone to disease to be a permanent companion.

Saker falcon
(Falco cherrug)

Biology: Another large falcon that breeds in the central zones from south-eastern Europe to central Asia and north-western China, migrating in winter to the Arabian Peninsula in North Africa. Its favourite food is small mammals such as ground squirrels and mice, as well as medium-sized birds.

History: The favourite hunting falcon of the Middle East, hence its Arabic name (*Ṣaqr*, meaning 'falcon'). Emperor Frederick II and later European rulers were also great admirers of this fast, powerful, and agile bird, using it to hunt herons, partridges, or hares. Sakers have been captured in Hungary and the Mediterranean and brought from there to Western Europe.

Peregrine falcon
(Falco peregrinus)

Biology: The world's most widespread falcon, with breeding sites from Alaska to South Africa. With a wingspan of up to 114 cm and a weight of up to 1300 g, it is considerably smaller than the gyrfalcon, but faster in flight. The appearance of this migratory bird varies according to habitat. It feeds on pigeons and other fowl, which it attacks by diving.

History: The peregrine falcon was the most common hunting falcon in pre-modern Europe, appearing in sources under a variety of names or simply called 'falcon'. Its speed made it ideal for hunting ducks, pheasants, crows, or magpies. Some regions, such as Flanders, have specialized in catching migrating peregrine falcons since the Middle Ages.

Merlin falcon
(Falco columbarius)

Biology: With an average wingspan of around 60 cm and a weight of only 190 g, merlins are the smallest falcon species in Europe. They breed in the north but can be found all over the continent in winter. Fast and agile hunters, they feed on larks and other small birds, small rodents, and larger insects.

History: Large herons could not be brought down from the sky with the merlin, but like the sparrowhawk, it was a favourite hunting bird of the nobility since the Middle Ages. Easily carried in the fist, it could serve as a 'starter bird' for young princes and was also considered by some authors to be a perfect companion for ladies.

Eurasian goshawk
(Accipiter gentilis)

Biology: The common goshawk belongs to the Accipitridae family, which differs from falcons in appearance and behaviour. This powerful bird of prey, which can reach a wingspan of 127 cm and a weight of 2.2 kg, prefers to hunt in woodland where it waits for its prey on tree branches. It uses its sharp claws to seize and kill partridges, squirrels, and rabbits.

History: As long as central and western Europe was largely covered by forest, the goshawk was the favourite flying hunting assistant. In the early modern period, however, it fell behind the falcon as princes found hunting with trained birds of prey from the ground less spectacular and the nobility increasingly favoured hunting with dogs and shotguns.

Figure 0.5 The rulers' raptors—a short profile
Source: By Nadir Weber. Images: Wikimedia Commons.

view of most falconry historians, this was the beginning of the 'golden age of falconry' in Europe.[80]

The famous falconry treatise by Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194–1250), *De arte venandi cum avibus* ('On the Art of Hunting with Birds'), is one of the earliest and most detailed European syntheses of the medieval knowledge about falcons and the art of training them.[81] Emperor Frederick II, who had ventured to the Holy Land himself, ordered Arabic falconry treatises to be translated into Latin and was advised by Muslim falconers at his court in Sicily.[82] This intercultural exchange led to innovations such as the use of easily removable leather hoods to calm down the birds. The methods of falcon training, based on food management and positive reinforcement, are also described in astonishing detail in Frederick's work. *De arte venandi cum avibus* was copied several times (Figure 0.6), translated into French, and first printed at the end of the fifteenth century, before falling into relative obscurity for some time. After its 'rediscovery' in the second half of the eighteenth century, it would finally gain a—somewhat exaggerated—reputation as a pioneering work of scientific observation.[83]

Until 1500, numerous other falconry treatises, including beautiful miniatures showing falconers and their birds, were written in different languages and parts of Europe.[84] As soon as printing with movable type was invented, falconry was one of the first subjects on which books were printed.[85] Falconry scenes in poems and other literary works as well as lords' seals and coats of arms illustrated with falcons and eagles bear witness to the enormous cultural impact of falconry among the social elites of this time.[86] In an age that loved allegories and metaphors, hunting with trained birds of prey and its representation had become a cultural medium for expressing social status, political dominance, or intimate relationships.[87] This led to an increasing differentiation of hunting methods and their symbolism. Whereas hunting with falcons 'in high flight' for herons or cranes was considered the hunt of kings and great lords, hunting 'in low flight'

[80] See, e.g., Beck/Rémy, *Le faucon*, book jacket: 'c'est au Moyen Âge que la fauconnerie connaît son âge d'or'.

[81] On this work and its context, see, e.g., Paulus/Van den Abeele, 'Introduction'; Fansa/Ritzau, eds, *Von der Kunst mit Vögeln zu jagen*.

[82] Van den Abeele, 'Inspirations orientales'; Van den Abeele and Besseyre, eds, *Der Wiener Moamin*.

[83] In this perspective, Frederick's treatise is often discussed alongside Albertus Magnus' *Historia animalium*. For a discussion of these modernist readings, see Bruttin, 'Von oben herab', pp. 25–9, 203–25.

[84] For an overview, see Lindner, *Bibliographie*; Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie au Moyen Âge*; Smets/Van den Abeele, 'Manuscrits et traités de chasse'; Giese, 'Graue Theorie oder grünes Weidwerk?'

[85] As early as 1480, a book on the training of hawks was printed in Augsburg and then reprinted several times. See Lindner, *Die deutsche Habichtslehre*, pp. 10, 38.

[86] On the rich symbolism of falconry in the Middle Ages and beyond, see esp. Chamerlat, *Falconry and Art*; Grimm, ed., *Raptor on the Fist*, 2 vols; Hadjinicolaou, *The Art of Medieval Falconry*.

[87] See esp. Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie dans les lettres françaises*, part 2.

Figure 0.6 Illustration from a French translation of Emperor Frederick II's *De arte venandi cum avibus*, parchment, late fifteenth century. This copy of Frederick's treatise was illustrated by a Bruges master and his assistants in 1482. The frontispiece illustrates the strong presence of animals in late medieval courtly culture and the many relationships with birds of prey. The work later came into the possession of the French King Louis XII and contributed to the transfer of knowledge about falconry from the Middle Ages to the monarchies of early modern Europe

Source: Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. fr. 170, f. 1r, e-codices.ch.

with goshawks and sparrowhawks was also widely practised among other segments of medieval society.[88]

Bringing meat and status, trained raptors were the perfect companions for medieval rulers and their courts. As accounting books testify, courtly falconers, hawkers, and birds frequently accompanied the kings on their travels.[89] Yet probably even more often, rulers hunted with the birds supplied by their local hosts around the country. The kings of England created serjeanties for men whose duty was to house and care for birds of prey, from which a group of hereditary nobles would arise, and King Francis I of France (r. 1515–47) still relied on decentralized management of falcons.[90] Although Frederick's famous treatise had concentrated on the training of falcons, hawking was probably more widely practised at court until the sixteenth century, as it was better adapted to the changing environmental conditions of the wooded regions and provided game for the court kitchen.[91] Accordingly, several treatises on hawk training written and printed under the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519)—who was usually portrayed with a sharp hawk's nose—testify to the rulers' special affinity with this powerful bird of prey.[92]

As textual and visual sources suggest, a typical medieval falconry party involved a group of noblemen—and ladies—riding together with the duke or king through the countryside, their raptors on their fist, in search of partridges and other game. This gave the hunt itself a competitive character, emphasizing the community rather than the differences between the ruler and his vassals. Thus, in his fourteenth-century *Roman des deduis*, the French king's chaplain Gace de la Buigne describes a falconry party at which the king let his personal falcon compete with that of his master falconer. After several rounds of hunting, the king converses while dining with his *seigneurs* about the pastime of falconry.[93] According to Roy Modus, the protagonist of another literary hunting text by Henri de Ferrières, hunting with sparrowhawks was particularly popular at court because it allowed 'many people to hunt together, line up across the grounds and hunt for themselves, and see who flies better'.[94] Hence, medieval falconry served as a medium of elite integration, defined and renewed through the performance of chivalric virtues.

[88] Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks*, pp. 36–49.
[89] Ibid., pp. 55, 65, 95.
[90] Ibid., pp. 59, 75–9, 88; Schmidt, 'Falkenhaltung und das Problem der Mobilität'.
[91] Niedermann, *Das Jagdwesen am Hofe*, p. 42; Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks*, pp. 93–6. On the important role of falconry in medieval hunting culture, see also Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk*.
[92] See Lindner, *Die deutsche Habichtslehre*.
[93] Gace de la Buigne, *Le roman des deduis*, ed. Blomquist, pp. 426–40. See Niedermann, *Das Jagdwesen am Hofe*, pp. 190–1, and for similar observations regarding the hunt with dogs, Teuscher, 'Hunde am Fürstenhof', pp. 365–6.
[94] Ferrières, *Les livres du roy Modus*, ed. Tilander, fol. xcv.

This book challenges established narratives of hunting history, in which falconry occupies a prominent place in the chapters on the Middle Ages, while it falls out of the scheme in those on later centuries.[95] It argues that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not end the history of falconry in premodern Europe but changed its meanings. To date, apart from a few regional studies of German courts, little attention has been paid to courtly falconry in this period, and where it is mentioned, teleological assumptions dominate. Thus, historians of Baroque court culture have described falconry as a 'charming anachronism'.[96] Other scholars have stated a 'decline of falconry' during the early modern period, caused by the emergence of effective hunting guns and accelerated by social conflicts such as the English Civil War.[97] While it is true that from the second half of the seventeenth century shooting guns increasingly replaced the hawk as a hunting weapon among the members of the landed nobility, this does not apply to courts. On the contrary, falconry was now more than ever an appropriate means of distinction and representation for sovereigns. Even in England, after the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660, falconry would experience a revival, as the royal family staked a claim to rejoin the European community of sovereign rulers.

I will therefore argue that the 'continued' importance of falconry observed by some historians for the late sixteenth century in France or the Mediterranean should not be interpreted as the last glow of a medieval method of hunting but as a sign of its beginning renaissance.[98] These crucial decades for the formation of dynastic states saw falconry turn into a distinctly courtly type of hunting, complementary to the highly ritualized *chasse à courre* on the ground.[99] Numerous new treatises on falconry were written during this period, and many of the older ones were distributed more widely than ever before with the help of the printing press. At the same time, courtly falconry was depicted in an unprecedented mass of images that combined courtly portraiture with new methods of landscape and animal painting. The seventeenth century also saw the emergence of an unprecedented international trade in birds of prey, linking outlying regions such as Malta and Iceland with the power centres of the European society of princes. Along with the mobile birds, professional falconers travelled from court to court, some rising to the highest offices of state. In short, the courts of the European

[95] See, e.g., Hobusch, *Fair Game*, pp. 77–80; Rösener, *Die Geschichte der Jagd*, pp. 150–64; or Merlotti, ed., *Le cacce reali*, where falconry is largely absent.

[96] Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, p. 630; Newton, *La petite cour*, p. 90. Salvadori, *La chasse*, p. 200, postulates a decline of falconry in France for the same period. For a brief but informative account of the continuation of falconry at the French court, see Parpoil, 'La chasse au vol en France', pp. 130–4.

[97] Grassby, 'The Decline of Falconry in Early Modern England'. On falconry in early modern England and its literary representations, see also Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*.

[98] De Smet, *La fauconnerie à la Renaissance*. See also Malacarne, *Lords of the Sky*; Burnett/Van den Abeele, eds, *Falconry in the Mediterranean Context*.

[99] On the symbolic functions of the *chasse à courre* in courtly Europe, see esp. Merlotti, ed., *Le cacce reali*.

Baroque—the period from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries[100]—became the scene of a new golden age of falconry in Europe.

0.4 Baroque Europe from a Bird's-Eye View

In the following chapters, I will tell the history of this second golden age of falconry in parallel with the life histories of the birds of prey that made it possible. Falcons deserve particular interest not only because of their hunting abilities but also because of their special status as captive wild animals that turned into princely hunting assistants. In contrast to horses and dogs, falcons and hawks never reproduced under human supervision in the early modern period. Yet, as individuals, thousands of captive birds of prey became 'tame' cohabitants of the courtly social sphere and learnt to fly for the sovereigns during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By bringing together scattered pieces of information from a wide variety of archives and printed materials, the typical life courses of early modern falcons hunting for princes can be reconstructed. In a certain sense, this study thus seeks to present a collective biography of the falcons that served early modern rulers, which is then put into relation with the evolution of princely courts from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries.[101]

The narrative of the book is inspired by the raptors' way of seeing the world. It combines broad sketches of contextual landscapes with a close-up tracking of significant cases—a method that has recently also been discussed as a possible model for global history.[102] This approach makes it necessary to draw on a vast number of sources. Printed works on natural history and falconry treatises in various European languages are analysed in combination with close readings of handwritten court records from sixteen archives and libraries situated in different parts of Europe.[103] In addition, pictorial sources play an important role as evidence both for certain practical questions, some of which are not documented in writing—including species identification—and for the study of the medial-symbolic functions of falconry. Plans of falconry buildings that no longer exist, material sources such as lures and falcon hoods, and, finally, the physical remains of individual hunting birds such as the gyrfalcons from Vienna provide further important information to complete the overall picture of this study.

[100] In this broad definition of the epoch, I follow Stollberg-Rilinger, 'The Baroque State', p. 842, n. 8.

[101] Biographical approaches in animal history have so far been applied mainly to exotic animals or companion animals of famous people; see Baratay, *Animal Biographies*. For the potential of a collective biography or prosopography of animals, defined as 'an investigation of the common characteristics of an historical group, whose individual biographies may be largely untraceable', see Krebber and Roscher, 'Introduction', p. 5.

[102] Osterhammel, *Die Flughöhe der Adler*, pp. 7–8, 242.

[103] The archival inventories as well as the printed materials used for this study are listed in the bibliography.

The book is divided into two parts that combine a chronological and an analytical approach, reflecting the different temporalities of animal history and court history. The first, 'Birds' Lives', follows the life courses of these raptors from their eyries to their spectacular deployment and usually silent death in Europe's dynastic centres. Chapter 1 reconstructs the falcons' place in the early modern system of knowledge and then follows a typical hunting falcon on its journey from Greenland or the Aegean Sea via Copenhagen, the Netherlands, or Venice to Vienna and Versailles. Chapter 2 will show how the captive, hypersensitive birds were gradually integrated into the courtly figuration and eventually learnt to play their new role. Chapter 3 then follows the dramatic courses of the princely hunts high up in the sky and discusses the specific forms of animal agency that came into play during these performances. Overall, this will show that the lives of courtly animals were characterized by numerous radical changes and that the degree of their integration into human society could vary considerably over time.

This book argues that the role of falconry in the symbolic construction of European Baroque monarchies can only be properly understood against the background of this 'animal viewpoint'.[104] The changing lives and daily interactions between falcons and humans at court decidedly shaped the perception of falconry and its birds. Their independent behaviour, high care and feeding requirements, and physical vulnerability made falcons less a metaphor for royal domesticating power than for the balance of incentives and demands that a good ruler had to strike. The falcons' high flights and their return to the sovereign's protection and care thus became a memorable symbol of successful cooperation between unequal players, based on material or symbolic benefits and constant communication. This reveals an affinity to a political style that more recent historiography has proposed as an interpretive lens in contrast to the older paradigm of absolutism: the Baroque state, 'an artefact, coupled with a love of geometry, theatricality, and ceremonial order, a general climate of competition, and finally, a fundamental tension between ideal order and factual disorder'.[105]

The second part of the study, 'Flying Courts', is devoted to the role of falcons and falconry in the formation of this system. The main focus is on the French royal court and the imperial court in Vienna, which represent two paradigmatic models for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Baroque court culture.[106] While the French court in Paris and Versailles became the relatively uncontested centre

[104] Baratay, *Le point de vue animal*; Baratay, 'Building an Animal History'. Here and in the following, terms such as 'animal viewpoint' or 'bird's perspective' do not mean that historians should try to put themselves in the minds of these creatures (which would be a difficult, if not impossible, undertaking even in the case of people from the past). Rather, they refer to an analytical and narrative approach that places animals at the centre and reconstructs the relevant context around them, as it will be the case in Part One of this book.

[105] Stollberg-Rilinger, 'The Baroque State', p. 826.

[106] See the paradigmatic comparative study by Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, and individual contributions in Babel/Braun/Nicklas, eds, *Bourbon und Wittelsbach*.

of an integrated kingdom during this period, the Viennese court combined the functions of the power base of the expanding Austrian Habsburg composite monarchy in Central and Eastern Europe and a focal point of the politically fragmented German Holy Roman Empire. The Habsburgs were therefore in constant political and symbolic competition with other German dynasties such as the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, the Saxon Wettins, and the House of Brandenburg. Paradoxically, however, the absence of the highest dignitaries of the empire from the imperial court also gave the emperor greater freedom in appointing his court offices than did the supposedly absolute French kings, who had to accept a de facto monopoly of the most prestigious court offices by the French court aristocracy.[107]

Both courts not only played a formative role in the development of Baroque court culture, but also in the history of European courtly falconry. During the period, the two courts maintained the largest falconries in courtly Europe, with the most human staff and the most birds. As we shall see, however, other less prominent players, such as the kings of Denmark and falconers from the Netherlands, also played an important role—making the history of courtly falconry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a truly European one. Chapter 4 examines the origins and social position of the court falconers, who in some cases had remarkable court careers and remained present as a group of migrant specialists until the end of the eighteenth century. Chapter 5 shows how falcons became a symbol of royal sovereignty in the third dimension of aerial space, taking their own place in the Baroque theatre states. Finally, the reasons for the sudden end of the second golden age of falconry in Europe during the Revolutionary Wars will be examined in detail. This will lay the foundations for returning to the fundamental questions regarding the status of animals in *ancien régime* society, and for placing the history of European courtly falconry in a global perspective.

Rulers and Raptors: Falcons in Courtly Europe, 1600–1793. Nadir Weber, Oxford University Press.
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[107] Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones*. On the court nobility in Vienna, see Hengerer, *Kaiserhof und Adel*.

PART I
BIRDS' LIVES

1
Distant Origins

On 3 November 1704, the Grand Master of the Order of St John on Malta, Ramón Perellos y Roccafùl (1637–1720), wrote a letter to the king of France in which he showed some dissatisfaction with the catch of birds this year. 'I am quite aggrieved that the number and the quality of each species is not more considerable', he told Louis XIV. Yet, he had at least been able to send 'one lanner from Russia, one lanner from Sicily, three peregrines, one peregrine tiercel, three gentles, and one moulted gentle' on the way to France.[1] Despite the dangers of war and sea, the Maltese falcons arrived safely at Versailles some weeks later. There, the Commandant de Tyange, a knight of the French 'Langue', handed over his master's living gifts and received a gratification of 3,000 livres, combined with a thank-you letter of the Sun King to the Grand Master.[2]

As this chapter will show, the gifting of falcons was not an occasional courtesy but part of a regular exchange that linked peripheral places on early modern Europe's map like Malta with the continent's dynastic centres. Furthermore, it will study how we can make sense of the information given in letters such as the one written by the Grand Master of the Order of Saint John: What was a 'moulted gentle'? Why did the Grand Master think that the lanner falcons originally came from Sicily and Russia? And what did these birds experience before they finally arrived at the French royal court? The chapter will start with an analysis of early modern natural history books. It will show what types of falcons and hawks were known to early modern observers, what they were called and how they were classified, and what remained unknown about their lives before captivity. Then their capture in the wild and their journeys to the courts will be analysed, showing how the falcons were transformed from independent wild animals into objects of global commerce or diplomatic exchange.

1.1 Falcons in Early Modern Natural History

Falcons were a prominent subject in books on the natural history of animals. In this genre of learned writing that began to flourish in the sixteenth century and

[1] Grand Master Ramon Perellos y Roccaful to King Louis XIV, Malta, 3 November 1704, AAE, CP Malte, vol. 3, fol. 232r.

[2] The letter is dated Versailles, 18 January 1705, AAE, CP Malte, vol. 3, fols. 242r, 253r. On the diplomatic gift exchange between the French crown and the Knights of Malta, see Petiet, *Le roi et le grand maître*, pp. 86–94.

has often been considered as the forerunner of modern zoology,[3] detailed and richly illustrated chapters were devoted to different species of birds of prey and falcons in particular, providing information about the birds' appearance and 'character'. Printed books on birds, such as richly illustrated treatise *De avium natura* by the Swiss polymath Conrad Gessner (1516–1565) and the *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* by the French humanist Pierre Belon (1517–1564), both published in 1555, reveal a growing knowledge of birds of prey from different parts of the world and a scientific endeavour to compare and classify these flying creatures.[4]

However, early modern natural histories also contain remarkable blind spots. For instance, Gessner considered the breeding places of the peregrine falcon to be unknown by definition. According to the Zurich scholar, peregrines were called foreign (*peregrinus*) or foreigners (*Frömdling*) 'because they fly back and forth in all countries, or because you cannot find their nest, as they are captured far away from the place where they were born'.[5] Accordingly, Gessner and his colleagues could not provide any details about the natural living conditions and the modes of reproduction of peregrine and other falcons, nor about their preferred prey and migrating routes. In contrast, Gessner's reference to the capture of peregrines points to the significant moment when the raptors entered the scene of human observation. Setting aside the question of their past lives, he told his readers in great detail how one can train falcons for hunting.[6] Consequently, the hawk represented on the cover page of the German edition of his book on the nature of birds is wearing falconry bells (Figure 1.1).

This example shows that the blind spots concerning the falcons' origins and their life in the wild are not only due to the lack of precise observation techniques. Rather, they point to the underlying structure of the early modern naturalist discourse, whose 'rules of formation' still placed animals in a deeply anthropocentric world.[7] This world view was based on God's command that Man should 'have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (Genesis 1:28). The falcons' usefulness as hunting assistants was therefore the determining factor that shaped their

[3] See, e.g., Enenkel/Smith, eds, *Early Modern Zoology*; Enenkel/Smith, eds, *Zoology in Early Modern Europe*. On the early modern discourse of natural history, see also Jardine/Secord/Spary, eds, *Cultures of Natural History*; Garrod/Smith, eds, *Natural History*; Förschler/Mariss, eds, *Akteure, Tiere, Dinge*.

[4] On early modern writings in ornithology, see the overview by Smith, 'On Toucans and Hornbills'. Based on an in-depth study of Gessner's original Latin book on birds, Katharina B. Springer and Ragnar K. Kinzelbach have recently pointed to his detailed empirical studies based on stuffed birds and his observation of living birds (Springer/Kinzelbach, *Das Vogelbuch von Conrad Gessner*, esp. pp. 45–52).

[5] Gessner, *Historiæ Animalium III de Avium natura* (1555), p. 69; Gessner, *Vogelbuoch* (1557), p. 153; Gessner, *Vollkommenes Vogel-Buch* (1669), p. 297.

[6] Gessner, *Vogelbuoch* (1557), pp. 147–50.

[7] In the sense of Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, here esp. ch. 2.

NS 4

Vogelbuch

Darin die art / natur vnd eigenschafft
aller vöglen / sampt jrer waren Contrafactur / angezeigt wirt:
allen Liebhaberen der künsten/Artzeten/Maleren/Goldschmiden/Bildschnitzeren/Seydenstickern/Weydleüten vnd Köchen / nit allein lustig zů erfaren/sunder gantz nutzlich vnd dienstlich zebrauchen. Erstlich durch Doctor Conradt Geßner in Latin beschriben: neüwlich aber durch Růdolff Heüßlin mit fleyß in das Teütsch gebracht / vnd in ein kurtze ordnung gestelt.

Heinrici Wönlichij Tigurini.
1625.

Mit Keiserlicher Maiestat freyheit/ in acht jaren nit nachzetrucken/ bey peen vnd straff acht March lötigs golds/nach laut deß Originals.

Getruckt zů Zürych bey Christoffel Froschouer/
im jar als man zalt M. D. LVII.

Figure 1.1 Cover page of Conrad Gessner's *Vogelbuoch* (Zurich, 1557). While the Swiss naturalist's *De avium natura* (1555) was aimed at a scholarly audience, the popular German translation published by the same publisher two years later was also intended to be useful to 'doctors, painters, goldsmiths, carvers, silk embroiderers, hunters, and cooks' according to the subtitle. Accordingly, a trained hawk adorns the cover

Source: Zentralbibliothek Zürich, NS 4|F.

representation in natural history books, whereas their lives before or after captivity remained largely uncommented. Thus, the history of knowledge about falcons in the early modern period is not only a history of an accumulation of facts and of classification but also a history of unknowns and omissions. Moreover, it is deeply intertwined with the practices of power that men exerted on falcons' bodies through captivity and their use for hunts.

Whereas the early modern students of Aristotle and Pliny began to classify fishes, birds, and 'quadrupeds' according to physical similarities, their endeavour was also to determine and represent the natural hierarchies. The Aristotelian-Christian motif of a *scala naturae* or Great Chain of Beings therefore remained influential up to the eighteenth century.[8] In this great hierarchy of living beings, flying birds could be placed above all other animals thanks to their proximity to the angels and to God.[9] In the pictorial programmes at princely residences, such as the ducal palace in Mantua, the practice of falconry was therefore associated with the heavenly sphere higher beings (Figure 1.2). Moreover, especially the powerful golden eagle but also falcons were associated with divine qualities and had therefore been established symbols of rulership since the medieval period.[10]

At the same time, the fact that birds of prey are predators made their position in the symbolic order of beings more ambiguous. Especially goshawks were not only considered to be powerful hunters that could serve humans but also potential killers of domestic hens, which is why they were fought as harmful 'predatory birds' in some regions. According to the English clergyman and naturalist Edward Topsell (*c.*1572–1625), it was taboo for good Christians to eat goshawks because 'they are cruell, and devourers of other small birdes; therefore you shall not eate them, least by their example you learne to be unmercifull and cruell allsoe.'[11] Gessner also described the character of goshawks as 'rapacious and cruel'. Three pages later, however, he also praised their boldness and bravery when acting as hunting assistants.[12] Thus, birds of prey formed a group of species that escaped the wild-versus-domestic as well as the friend-versus-enemy schemes that shaped the early modern discourse on animals up to Buffon.[13]

[8] The basic reference for this concept—despite the famous methodological critique by Quentin Skinner—remains Arthur Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*; see esp. pp. 183–4, on the persistence of this idea in the eighteenth century.

[9] See, for example, Topsell, *The Fowles of Heaven* (1613), pp. 15–17, who compares birds with angels. In other writings, however, they were also placed below quadrupeds and other larger mammals or below animals that were considered more intelligent; see Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, pp. 184, 197.

[10] See Peters, 'Falke, Falkenjagd'; Grimm, ed., *Raptor on the Fist*; and Hadjinicolaou, 'Macht wie die des Königs' (and other studies of the same author). On birds and other animals as cultural signifiers in premodern bestiaries, see, among others, Rowland, *Birds with Human Souls*; Pastereau, *Bestiaires du Moyen Âge*; Dittrich/Dittrich, *Lexikon der Tiersymbole*.

[11] Topsell, *The Fowles of Heaven* (1613), p. 9.

[12] Gessner, *Vollkommenes Vogel-Buch* (1669 edn), pp. 243, 246.

[13] On Buffon's still highly anthropocentric vision of nature and animals, see esp. Hoquet, *Buffon*; Loveland, *Rhetoric and Natural History*; Meisen, *Die Charakterisierung der Tiere*.

Figure 1.2 Detail of the ceiling fresco in the *camera dei falconi*, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, attributed to Lorenzo Costa il Giovane or Ippolito Andreasi, 1581. The fresco is part of a larger pictorial programme in the 'Chamber of the Falcons' and was commissioned by Duke Guglielmo Conzaga (r. 1550–87). It illustrates the association of falconry and its birds with the celestial sphere inhabited by angels. The central motif of aerial combat shows that falconry was not strictly a peaceful affair

Source: Complesso Museale Palazzo Ducale di Mantova/Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo.

The biases in the representation of falcons in early modern natural history were also a consequence of the primary sources that were being used. When writing their books, the naturalists relied heavily on the accumulated experience of falconers that was accessible to the learned public through falconry treatises. The intertextuality between the two genres of writing can be traced back to the late medieval period when the first European treatises on the art of hunting with birds were written. Yet thanks to the early modern printing industry, the transmission of facts, arguments, and images of falcons accelerated significantly and

became part of a quickly expanding paper world of knowledge.[14] It was in this context that Emperor Frederick's famous thirteenth-century treatise *De arte venandi cum avibus* was printed for the first time in Augsburg in 1596—together with the chapters on falcons and hawks from Albertus Magnus' *Historia animalium*.[15]

The proximity of the two genres also shaped the naturalists' classifications. Gessner's French counterpart Pierre Belon discussed falcons and hawks in a separate chapter entitled 'On the birds of prey that are used for falconry', with reference to some recently printed falconry treatises.[16] Shortly afterwards, the French bookseller and author Guillaume Bouchet (1513–1594) included a description of all birds of prey used for falconry in an edition of the late medieval falconry treatise of Jean de Franchières (d. 1488).[17] In the mid-seventeenth century, the English naturalists John Ray (1627–1705) and Francis Willughby (1635–1672) made the case for a stricter zoological classification of birds of prey, differentiating between 'long-winged' falcons and 'short-winged' hawks.[18] However, for the more popular English edition of their *Ornithology*, a detailed 'Summary of Falconry, collected out of several Authors' was added, which compiled entire sections from falconry treatises.[19] Moreover, in their classification scheme, 'the more generous' falcons and hawks that could be trained for the hunt were separated from the 'more cowardly and sluggish, or else indocile' birds of prey such as buzzards that were 'neglected and permitted to live at large' by the falconers.[20] In the following century, the leading naturalist George-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon (1707–1788), still explicitly referred to information provided by the chief of the king's cabinet's falconry, the Chevalier de Forget, when discussing the possible origins of birds of prey.[21]

Yet, the interaction between falconry knowledge and natural history was not one-sided. From the late sixteenth century onwards, the authors of falconry treatises also adopted description standards from natural history when presenting the abilities of their falcons, and referred to 'philosophers' in order to add

[14] This is not the place for a discussion of the growing literature on the cultural and social history of knowledge in the early modern period. Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge*, offers an important synthesis and Füssel, ed., *Wissensgeschichte*, a valuable recent methodological overview.

[15] See Frederick II/Albertus Magnus, *Reliqua librorum Friderici II. Imperatoris, De arte venandi cum avibus, cum Manfredi regis additionibus* (1596). On medieval falconry literature and its connection to the history of knowledge, see esp. Lindner, *Von Falken, Hunden und Pferden*, and Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie au Moyen Âge*; on their reception in the sixteenth century, see Klüh, 'Konkordanzen der europäischen Falknereiliteratur', De Smet, *La fauconnerie à la Renaissance*.

[16] Belon, *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (1555), p. 105.

[17] Bouchet, 'Recueil de tous les oyseaux de proye' (1585, first edn 1567).

[18] Willughby/Ray, *Ornithology* (1678), pp. 20, 55. On the context of Ray's and Willughby's work, see Birkhead, *The Wisdom of Birds*, pp. 27–51; Birkhead et al., 'Willughby's Ornithology'.

[19] Especially the treatises of George Turberville and Symon Latham; see Willughby/Ray, *Ornithology* (1678), pp. 397–441, and the foreword by John Ray.

[20] Willughby/Ray, *Ornithology* (1678), p. 55.

[21] Buffon, *Œuvres complètes de Buffon,* vol. VII: *Oiseaux* (1825), p. 76.

authority to their arguments or to dignify their art.[22] The poetic-educational *Hieracosophion* by the French humanist Jacques-Auguste du Thou (1553–1617), first published in 1582, placed itself between the two genres.[23] In several falconry treatises of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the engravings of falcons were modelled on the illustrations of ornithological works (Figure 1.3). And Jean-Baptiste Faultrier, a member of the French royal falconry, wrote a voluminous *Traitté general des oiseaux* ('General Treatise on Birds') in 1660, citing a wide range of both falconry treatises and natural history books.[24] As objects of discourse, falcons thus moved freely between natural history and falconry treatises.

Morphnos, ou Morphna, & Nittophonos, & Plangos, Plancus, Plangus, & Clangus, en Grec, Anataria en Latin, Gerfault en Francois.
Du Faucon dit Gerfault & de sa nature. CHAP. V.

Figure 1.3 Representations of the gyrfalcon in Belon's *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (1555) and De Franchières' *Fauconnerie* (1585). Illustrations of falcons wandered between works of natural history and falconry treatises, as did the associated knowledge. Curiously, the main difference in the depictions is that in the naturalist Belon's work the gyrfalcon is shown on the fist of a falconer, whereas in the falconry treatises the bird is depicted in a more 'naturalistic' setting, sitting on a branch of a tree

Source: P. Belon, *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux*, 1555, p. 95, Bibliothèque publique et universitaire Neuchâtel, ZQ 120; J. de Franchières, *Fauconnerie*, 1585 edn, p. 2v, BnF Gallica ark:/12148/cb304582299.

[22] See, e.g., Gommer/Gommer, *De l'autourserie* (1608), p. 19, on the nature of migrating birds, or D'Arcussia, 'Lettres de Philoierax à Philofalco ou sont contenus les maladies des oyseaux, & les remedes pour les guerir', in *La fauconnerie* (1644), foreword and p. 128, referring to Aristotle and Pliny.

[23] See De Smet, *La fauconnerie à la Renaissance*, pp. 161–86.

[24] See Charmantier, 'Natural History and Divertissement', pp. 142, 148; Charmantier, 'L'ornithologie entre Renaissance et Lumières'. Faultrier, whose birth and death are unknown, had been *controlleur* of the royal falconries in the 1630s; his work was dedicated to his patron Nicolas Fouquet and probably remained unpublished because of the latter's fall from grace.

Beyond the dynamics of intertextuality, the confrontation with living and dead birds of prey stimulated the discourse. In the second half of the sixteenth century, in the context of expanding global markets and an increasing demand for exclusive exotic raptors for the princely falconries, a wide variety of such birds became accessible to those who wanted to study, describe, and depict them in detail. In 1555, Belon stated that many things were still unknown about the origins and destinations of birds of prey that passed France, yet 'foreigners know how to make a profit and are industrious in capturing them and bringing them to us, which is how we know them, because without them we would not have any foreign species'.[25] Likewise, an increasing number of portraits of more or less exotic raptor species entered the natural history books. They were usually based on the drawings of stuffed animals that were part of cabinets of curiosities, a fact that explains the falcons' often static and standardized positions.[26]

However, the growing mass of empirical information could also create additional confusion. Clearly distinguishing the different falcons is still a challenging task for ornithologists today because morphological characteristics of species vary significantly from region to region as well as between individuals of different sex and age.[27] It is thus hardly surprising that the representation of different raptor species by early modern authors was far from homogeneous and sometimes even contradictory within a single text. For instance, Conrad Gessner told his readers that there are ten 'species' (*Geschlecht*) of 'noble falcons' (*edele Falcken*), referring to Albertus Magnus' thirteenth-century classification, but in the end presented more than these ten species.[28] Of those, some—from a modern perspective—refer to one single species of peregrine falcon (in different areas or stages of life) and others, such as the ominous 'blue foot' (*Blaufuß*), to several possible species. Moreover, the Swiss naturalist added different sub-species and discussed a list of 'non-noble falcons' and other raptors, also indicating their different names in various European languages.

The problem of classifying falcons continued to be debated through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It also persisted after Carl de Linée (1707–1778) had established a new taxonomical system and had proposed to differentiate

[25] Belon, *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (1555), p. 107.

[26] See Balfe et al., eds, *Ad vivum?*; Schulze-Hagen et al., 'Avian Taxidermy in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance'; Steinheimer, 'The Whereabouts of Pre-Nineteenth Century Bird Specimens'; and, from a broader perspective, Saß, *Jagdgründe der Kunst*, pp. 119–32.

[27] For example, the question whether gyrfalcons (*Falco rusticolus*) and saker falcons (*Falco cherrug*) that share many morphological and genetic characteristics should be regarded as different species or rather as subspecies of a superspecies called *Falco hierofalco* is still debated among ornithologists. See Ciesielski, *Der Gerfalke*, pp. 36–44, and on the natural and cultural history of the gyrfalcon also Dement'ev, *Der Gerfalke*.

[28] Gessner, *Vogelbuoch* (1557), pp. 150–6; Gessner, *Vollkommenes Vogel-Buch* (1669), pp. 292–6, 301. For the species and their translations, see 'Supplementary Materials', Fig. 1, https://doi.org/10.48620/88108. On the classifications of falcons and hawks in the medieval period, see Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie au Moyen Âge*, pp. 51–75.

between twenty-six species of falcons in the 1758 edition of his *Systema naturae*.[29] Far from being universally accepted, this classification gave way to new disputes and even inspired one of Linné's most prominent and fervent critics—Buffon—to question any systematic taxonomy. Buffon referred to the 'instable and accidental character' of the birds' colour of plumage and other physical characteristics that were in constant change during one bird's lifetime.[30] The expansion of printed empirical knowledge on falcons therefore did not go hand in hand with a growing taxonomic precision. Throughout the early modern period, the fast-flying raptors escaped the growing discursive regimes of animal classification.

1.2 In Search of the White Queens

For the early modern printed discourse, classifying raptors was not only a question of similarities but also of attributed rank, which was mirrored in the order in which the species were discussed in the bird encyclopaedias. As mentioned above, the 'royal' eagle usually held first place among all birds of prey, but falcons followed shortly after as birds representing noble values.[31] Among the different kinds of falcons, more nuanced hierarchies were established. Figuring under different names, the peregrine falcon served as the emblematic 'noble' falcon and was therefore also called *falco gentilis*. In its posture and hunting qualities, the peregrine clearly outmatched its smaller cousins, the hobby and the merlin, which received less attention in early modern books on natural history and falconry. The same can be said about the impressive goshawk and the versatile sparrow hawk, which had been in high esteem in the late Middle Ages and were still prominently placed on the cover of and inside Gessner's natural history of birds.[32] Yet with the beginning Baroque falconry and its preference for birds for the 'high flight', these 'short-winged' raptors were relegated to second place in falconry treatises.[33]

[29] Linné, *Systema naturae* (1758), vol. 1, pp. 88–92. Several names of falcon species go back to this path-breaking work that established the binomial nomenclature of animal and plant species. However, this falcon taxonomy was still a far cry from the modern version that situates falcons and hawks in different orders and groups. For instance, in Linné, the *Falco rusticolus* and the *Gyrofalco* are assigned to the same species.

[30] Buffon, *Oiseaux* (1825 edn), p. 26.

[31] In the popular *Booke of Saint Albans*, first printed in 1486, different species of raptors were even directly related to different social ranks in society. On the falconry-related content in this often quoted yet not entirely representative source, see Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*, pp. 53–72; regarding the discussion about noble and non-noble birds, pp. 73–94. Because of this established analogy, the peregrine falcon, the most commonly used falcon for falconry was also called 'gentle' falcon or *faucon gentil* in natural history and falconry books. See, e.g., Gessner, *Historiæ Animalium III de Avium natura* (1555), pp. 70–1. As mentioned above, all true falcons were presented as 'noble' falcons whereas other birds of prey that could not be trained for falconry and/or were scavengers, such as the red kite, were seen as 'non-noble'.

[32] Gessner, *Historiæ Animalium III de Avium natura* (1555), pp. 3–43; Gessner, *Vogelbuoch* (1557), pp. 120r–43r.

[33] For instance, d'Arcussia discusses the species, training, and general use of goshawks and sparrow hawks only long after that of the 'true' falcons; see d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 297–326.

Instead, the saker falcon and the gyrfalcon rivalled for precedence at the top of the hierarchy. Both are large and powerful falcons of the so-called hierofalcon group with breeding places far from European princely residences. For mid-sixteenth-century naturalists, the saker falcon—of which Belon quite accurately assumed that it breeds in 'Tartary' (Russia)—was still considered the 'principal among all birds of prey' used for falconry.[34] The particular esteem these raptors were held in can be traced back to the thirteenth century when Arabic falconry treatises and practices served as models of innovation. These traces are also embedded in its name that is derived from Arabic *Ṣaqr* ('falcon'), although late medieval authors began to establish an alternative etymology derived from *sacer* ('sacred') which perfectly seemed to express the bird's superior position.[35] At the turn of the seventeenth century, however, the gyrfalcon successfully challenged the saker's position as the most noble of all falcons.

The arguments in favour of the gyrfalcon were manifold. According to Jacques Auguste du Thou, the gyrfalcon was the best among all falcons for its brave 'character' and physical strength. Therefore, it was also the most wanted raptor among princes, which further elevated the Nordic raptor's rank.[36] While the naturalist Gessner had still assumed that the saker is bigger than the gyrfalcon, the learned falconer Charles d'Arcussia stated that gyrfalcons were not only the largest falcons, but also the best flyers, easily deployable for all manners of hunting, and, moreover, the most beautiful of all falcons.[37] Accordingly, later authors usually placed the gyrfalcon before the saker in their discussions of different types of hunting birds.[38] In 1765, the *Encyclopédie* summed up that the gyrfalcon is 'without doubt…the most powerful bird of prey employed for falconry; to nobility and force it adds the speed and agility of its flight.'[39]

Among the birds of different habitat and colour that belong to the species of *Falco rusticolus*, white-feathered females became the emblematic figure of early modern princely falconry (Figure 1.4). Their size, colour, and rarity made these

[34] Belon, *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (1555), pp. 108–10 (quote p. 108); Gessner, *Vogelbuoch* (1557), pp. 150–1, who declares that the gyrfalcon is the 'most noble and best' falcon *after* the saker (p. 151r).

[35] See Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie au Moyen Âge*, p. 71. The transcultural exchanges on falconry had been particularly intense at the court of Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen in Sicily; see, among others, Georges, *Das zweite Falkenbuch Kaiser Friedrichs II*, esp. pp. 26–31, 299–343.

[36] Du Thou, *Hieracosophion* (1582, ed. De Smet), pp. 260–61. See also De Smet, 'Princess of the North', on the perception of the gyrfalcon in the sixteenth century.

[37] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 51–4.

[38] For example, Morais, *Le véritable Fauconnier* (1683), p. 9.

[39] [Charles-Georges] Leroy (Le Roy), Art. 'Vol, chasse du vol', *Encyclopédie*, ed. Diderot/D'Alembert, vol. 17 (1765), pp. 440–1, quote p. 441. For more details about the history of knowledge on the gyrfalcon in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see De Smet, 'Princess of the North'. On their role in medieval falconry and trade, Paravicini, 'Tiere aus dem Norden', pp. 564–72, and recently Buquet, 'The Gyrfalcon in the Middle Ages'. Most of these contributions pay less attention to the questions of plumage colour and origins that are addressed specifically in this section, with a focus on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Figure 1.4 Philipp Ferdinand de Hamilton, *A red kite attacked by icelandic falcons*, *c.*1745. In this and many other falconry scenes painted by Philipp Ferdinand de Hamilton (*c.*1664–1750), the falcons are gyrfalcons imported from Iceland with almost entirely white plumage—the rarest and most precious sort of falcons available at the time
Source: Museum Belvedere, Vienna, inv. no. 4207.

birds the champions of early modern falconry. Female gyrfalcon are the biggest falcons on earth, reaching a wingspan of up to 1.6 m and a weight of up to 2.1 kg.[40] As in other raptor species, males—called 'tiercels' by falconers—are about a third smaller. Although it is questionable whether size enhances the hunting performance (smaller birds are more versatile), their size allowed gyrfalcons to attack large game birds such as herons and red kites, the most prestigious target of princely hunts, more easily. As Buffon noted, gyrfalcons were considered the 'most powerful, agile, and courageous birds of prey' after the eagle and, therefore, 'the most pricey and most valued of all birds used for falconry'—especially the females which were 'much larger and stronger than the males'.[41]

In contrast to this performance-related aspect, white plumage added much symbolic value, having been associated to purity, splendour, divinity, and royalty since the Middle Ages. The Pope and kings therefore usually rode white horses on

[40] See Ferguson-Lees/Christie, *Raptors of the World*, p. 911. For a detailed description of the species, its distribution, and its behavior, see Cieslieski, *Der Gerfalke*.
[41] Buffon, *Oiseaux* (1825 edn), p. 70.

ceremonial occasions, and white hounds were bred to form the French king's preferred hunting pack.[42] A white falcon was thus a suitable hunting assistant for a sovereign, symbolizing her owner's royal rank (see Chapter 5, Figures 5.4–5.6). Accordingly, contemporary authors always emphasized when animals with a bright fur or plumage colour took part in princely hunts. In 1615, for instance, the French King Louis XIII and his consort Anne of Austria were driven to a place near Bourget outside Paris by a coach drawn by *white* horses; then, the king had 'a gyrfalcon called *La Perle* [the Pearl], which apart from its wings was *white* like a swan'.[43] For the same reasons we also find white gyrfalcons as companions of the ruler in many princely portraits, and in cases such as the 'Queen of Iceland' who served the elector of Cologne in the 1730s, royal status was even symbolically attributed to the bird itself (Figure 1.5).[44]

Yet, what made white gyrfalcons particularly valuable in early modern time was their extreme rareness. In his chapter on the gyrfalcon (which he considered a type of eagle because of its size), Pierre Belon stated that 'it is a bird rare to see, except on the hands of the falconers of the grand lords' who could afford to pay the high prices on the market.[45] Whereas a peregrine cost around 30 and a goshawk 18 livres in the early seventeenth century, 75 livres had to be paid for an ordinary gyrfalcon and 150 livres for a white one.[46] Before the nineteenth century, most authors agreed that the most wanted white gyrfalcons could only be caught in one place: Iceland. On a map of 1539, the '*falco albus*' (white falcon) is represented as a native species of northern Iceland, sitting on the north-western coast where falcons were usually caught.[47] Some years later, Gessner reported that gyrfalcons could be found in Norway and Iceland and were brought to continental Europe by merchants who were also engaged in the fish trade.[48] According to the Swiss naturalist, the birds from Iceland were 'whiter and larger' than the gyrfalcons from Norway, even though he considered the latter to be better performers.[49] Because of these morphological differences, the gyrfalcons from Iceland were also seen as a separate subspecies of 'Icelandic falcons' or put in relation with the '*Falco albus*' which was mentioned in Albertus Magnus' *Historia animalium*

[42] See Paravicini Bagliani, *Le bestiaire du Pape*, pp. 66–89; Friedrich, 'Bunte Pferde', pp. 80–3; Rupp, 'Les chiens blancs du Roy'.

[43] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy', in *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 168 (my emphasis).

[44] See Hansmann, *Schloss Falkenlust*, p. 21.

[45] Belon, *Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (1555), pp. 95–6.

[46] Parpoil, 'La chasse au vol en France', p. 128.

[47] See De Smet, 'Princess of the North', pp. 1549–50.

[48] Gessner, *Historiæ Animalium III de Avium natura* (1555), p. 67. Gessner speaks of '*Hirlandia*' (in the German translation '*Irrland*'), i.e., Ireland, but from the context it seems clear that he means Iceland.

[49] Gessner, *Vogelbuoch* (1557), p. 152r. Later in his work, Gessner discusses the species of *falco albus* separately. D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 51, agrees that the best gyrfalcons suitable for flights on kites and herons were caught as migrating birds in Norway.

Figure 1.5 *Königin Æislænder*, *c.*1735, by an unknown artist. The portrait of the 'Queen of Iceland' is one of more than twenty bird portraits that hung in the castles of Falkenlust and Augustusburg of Elector Clemens August of Cologne. The special status of this white gyrfalcon—a gift from King Christian VI of Denmark to the elector—is reflected in the fact that several portraits of her were made from different perspectives

Source: Schloss Augustusburg in Brühl, Sommerappartement/UNESCO-Welterbestätte Schlösser Brühl, photo by VSB.

and continued to exist in early modern classifications.[50] In documents originating in the courts' falconry administrations, the rare birds were usually called '*Eisländer Falken*' or '*faucons d'Islande*', which had become something of an exclusive label.

This exclusiveness was the consequence of purchasing routes and their regulations by early modern rulers. Notebooks of Hanseatic merchants testify to the fact that in the sixteenth century, white and other gyrfalcons reached the continent on commercial routes, as Belon and Gessner also mentioned.[51] One century later, however, things had changed. In the 1660s, King Frederick III of Denmark (r. 1648–70), as sovereign of Iceland, took control of the exchange of Icelandic gyrfalcons by imposing a state monopoly on their capture and transport. At the same time, he transformed these birds' status of freely available commercial trading objects into media of diplomatic relations. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the kings of Denmark distributed the captured gyrfalcons from Iceland as diplomatic gifts to European princes and selected high-ranking nobles or state ministers, limiting the distribution of white gyrfalcons to the top monarchs.[52]

Thanks to this practice, detailed statistics about the capture and distribution of white, 'half-white', and 'grey' gyrfalcons from Iceland between 1731 and 1793 have been preserved in the Danish National Archives (see Figure 1.6).[53] An analysis of these sources confirms that the white Icelandic gyrfalcons were extremely rare. On average, only six (6.03) fully white individuals were caught and transported to the European courts each year, compared to the much more considerable number of almost seventy grey gyrfalcons (69.65) that accompanied the white 'queens of Iceland'.[54] From a modern ornithological perspective, the answer to the question why the white falcons were so rare might lie in their different origins. Gyrfalcons of the *candidans* type breed in the Polar zone, that is in north-east Greenland, and migrate only occasionally towards the south for the winter season or when they are driven there by shifting ice blocks.[55] It is therefore probable that

[50] On the *Falco albus*, see, e.g., Gessner, *Historiæ Animalium III de Avium natura* (1555), p. 72 (despite his notes on white gyrfalcons mentioned above, referring to Albertus Magnus); Aldrovandi, *Ornithologiae* ([1599], 1645 edn), pp. 485–87 (including a visual representation of the white falcon and referring to Albertus Magnus, too); Willughby/Ray, *Ornithology* (1678) p. 80 (referring to Aldrovandi). In Linné's eighteenth-century taxonomy, the 'white falcon' had finally disappeared as a separate species, but Buffon proposed to distinguish three types of gyrfalcons: the *gerfaut d'Islande*, the *gerfaut de Norwege*, and the *gerfaut blanc*; see Buffon, *Oiseaux* (1825 edn), p. 69.

[51] Mehler/Küchelmann/Holtermann, 'The Export of Gyrfalcons from Iceland'.

[52] See Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*, here pp. 87–93, and Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, pp. 54–5. I will return to this Danish falcon diplomacy below.

[53] The original lists for the annual catches and their distribution to foreign courts can be found in the series DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.637–48.

[54] These numbers are based on the information provided by Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, p. 71, who counts 374 white, 156 half-white, and 4,318 grey gyrfalcons for 1731–93 (with one year missing)—with a remarkable variation between zero and more than forty birds in some years.

[55] Between 1979 and 1992, a total of thirty-one non-breeding white *candidans* gyrfalcons from Greenland (one to four annually) were observed on Iceland in the winter season (i.e., between October and April); see Nielsen/Pétursson, 'Population Fluctuations', p. 70.

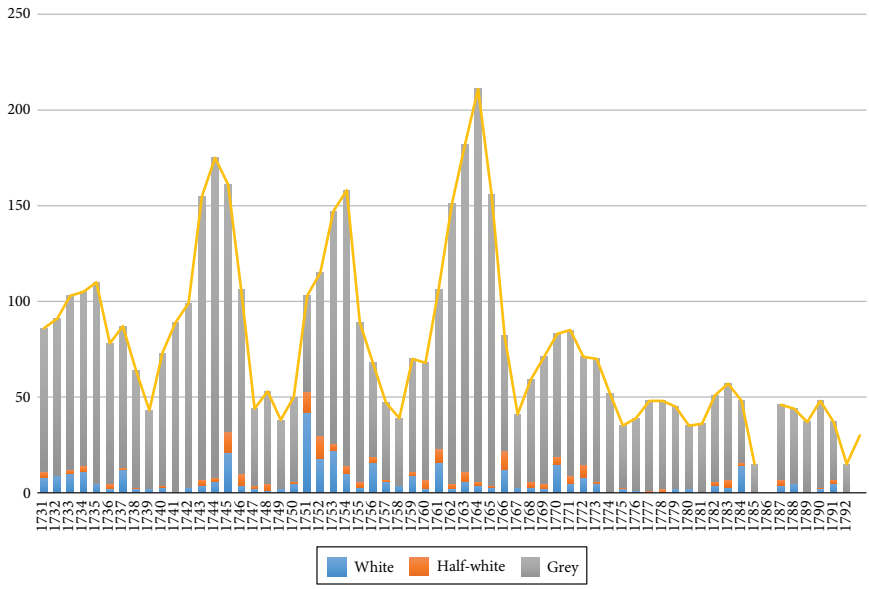

Figure 1.6 Annual capture of gyrfalcons on Iceland, 1731–93
Source: By the author; data based on Oorschot, *Forstelijke vliegers*, pp. 296–7.

most of the white falcons represented on the Danish capture lists had first made their way over parts of the North Atlantic before they were caught on the western coast of Iceland.[56] Such migratory individuals were not only rare visitors of the area, they had also already reached juvenile or adult age and were thus 'passengers' or 'haggards' in falconry terms, which made them more difficult to catch.

This leads to the question why these birds were not taken from their eyries on Greenland, a territory that was also under the sovereignty of the kings of Denmark.[57] Commercial routes already existed, and the high price would have probably been worth the effort of organizing a trade involving members of the local population, as was the case in Iceland or in the North American beaver fur trade.[58] Nevertheless, the nexus between the white falcons and Greenland remained largely unknown to naturalists and falconers until the middle of the eighteenth century.[59] Only in the 1750s did reports about gyrfalcons that had

[56] See Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, pp. 41–8.
[57] Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, p. 22, states that the white gyrfalcons were 'imported from Greenland', without providing further evidence. Discussing this possibility, Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, pp. 42–4, concludes that there is no known written evidence for the capture of gyrfalcons on Greenland in the premodern era—in contrast to other animals such as Arctic foxes and polar bears.
[58] Carlos/Lewis, *Commerce by a Frozen Sea*.
[59] Buffon and other naturalists discussed only Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and occasionally Russia as homelands of the gyrfalcons. See Buffon, *Oiseaux* (1825 edn), pp. 69–70; Linné, *Systema naturae* (1758), pp. 88–9.

been sighted in Greenland reach Europe, and in 1777, the Danish court internally discussed the question whether they should organize a capture of gyrfalcons there. Finally, a memorandum written by a falconer concluded that such an attempt would be against the king's interests—probably because this would decrease the worth of the Icelandic white gyrfalcon.[60] Consequently, the project was dismissed. Asked if white gyrfalcons breed in Greenland by the chief of the French cabinet falconry de Forget some years later, the Danish court explicitly denied that there was another 'true homeland of the gyrfalcons' apart from Iceland.[61]

Another fact in need of an explanation also reveals that the access to Nordic gyrfalcons was beyond human control: the enormous variation in the number of gyrfalcons captured over the years. It ranged between a mere fifteen caught in 1785 and 1792 to 175 caught in 1744 or even 211 in 1764 (see Figure 1.6 above).[62] The numbers indicate a general decline of the average number of birds caught between 1731 and 1793 that might be explained by previous excessive activity of the catchers that diminished the overall populations, or by declining trapping activities. Nevertheless, there is no plausible human-centred explanation for the wave-like variations with peaks approximately every ten years. As the trapping system itself remained relatively stable, the ups and downs must be explained by the varying numbers of gyrfalcons available to be caught on the spot or, more precisely, the variations in breeding.

From a modern zoological perspective, the main answer for this phenomenon can be found in the reproductive cycle of the rock ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*), a medium-sized bird of the pheasant family and the preferred prey of gyrfalcons. As ornithologists have observed, the number of ptarmigans also reaches a peak every ten years, which entails a larger food supply for gyrfalcons and thus stimulates their reproduction, that is, the number of laid eggs and nurtured offspring.[63] The same factor also explains why the quota of white and half-white gyrfalcons in the annual catches varied significantly, too. Whereas in 1741, eighty-nine grey but not a single white or half-white gyrfalcon had been caught, the latter made up more than 50 per cent of the annual catch in 1751, for instance. This has to do

[60] See the document entitled 'Pro memoria', dated Falconeergarden [Copenhagen], 21 November 1777, signed by Friderich Pedersen, in DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.642. I am indebted to Enrique Corredera Nilsson for translating this document written in Danish.

[61] Untitled memorandum of 1784, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.647. The memorandum was produced in the context of a correspondence between the chief of the French king's cabinet falconry, Jean-Claude Forget, and Count Holstein, in April 1784.

[62] The precise numbers of catches every year between 1731 and 1792 can be found in Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*, pp. 296–7.

[63] The fluctuations in the ptarmigan are in turn caused by those of the gyrfalcon, whose highest population density follows that of the rock ptarmigan with a time lag of three to four years. Other important factors are the weather conditions during the breeding season and the competition with other predators. See Nielsen/Pétursson, 'Population Fluctuations', Nielsen, 'Gyrfalcon Population and Reproduction'; Potapov/Sale, *The Gyrfalcon*, pp. 85–90.

with the reproduction cycles of lemmings and ptarmigans in Greenland that are not synchronic to those in Iceland, motivating varying numbers of Greenlandic gyrfalcons to move to the south-east for the winter.[64]

Thus, independently of the organizational efforts of the Danish crown to supply its falcon diplomacy with sufficient numbers of these precious birds, ecological factors that remained completely unknown to contemporary observers determined how many gyrfalcons could be caught in a particular season. As we will see later on, these ups and downs in the catching numbers and the limited availability of white gyrfalcons could cause much stress to the Danish crown that had to decide how many birds of which kind other European princes received every year. In some sense, the reproduction moods of rock ptarmigans on a peripheral Arctic island decisively influenced the availability of resources that the Danish kings could invest in their foreign policy.

1.3 Falcons, Catchers, and Their Traps

Falcons and hawks that served early modern falconers did not reproduce under human supervision but were caught in the wild. This means that they were never domesticated as a species. There is no single reason why these raptors were not bred in captivity. Indeed, the living conditions of captive birds of prey were far from perfect. Sitting attached on their bars in cold and humid rooms, there was little chance for male and female birds to mate and reproduce in early modern falconries, and the modern methods of artificial insemination were certainly unimaginable for early modern falconers. However, visual evidence from seventeenth-century Japan shows that the supervised reproduction and breeding of goshawks was by no means impossible under quite similar conditions.[65] In early modern Europe, originally wild or exotic birds such as yellow canaries were successfully bred in cages, and the princely falconry corps themselves encouraged the reproduction of game birds by constructing pheasantries and heronries.[66]

Considering these bird breeding practices, there has been surprisingly little effort to breed falcons under human supervision. If this question was discussed at all in falconry treatises, the main argument put forward against breeding attempts was the conviction that birds that were too much accustomed to human presence would become tame and lazy and never fully develop their natural hunting

[64] See Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, p. 46. The same author also discusses the possible influence of weather conditions, observing that after cold winters (when more sea ice moves between the islands) more white gyrfalcons were captured in Iceland than in normal years (p. 47).

[65] See Gersmann/Grimm, eds., *Raptor and Human*, vol. 1, p. 13; Mizuno, 'A Symbol of Power', p. 969; Gersmann, 'Drei monumentale Bücher', p. 301.

[66] See below, Chapter 3.2, and Birkhead/Schulze-Hagen/Kinzelbach, 'The Domestication of the Canary'; Breittruck, 'Pet Birds'.

instinct. Right at the beginning of his *Treatise of Hawkes and Hawking*, Edmund Bert declared that he could 'harbour no affection' for birds brought up by humans after having hatched 'for the multitude of their follies and faults'.[67] Thus, falconers considered the raptors' partial wildness as a precondition for good hunting abilities; their domestication did not seem to be an attractive goal. This combination of unfavourable breeding conditions and a discursive consensus about the better performance of wild-born falcons led to the phenomena that will be analysed in-depth in this book: the extensive correspondence, massive transnational mobilization of specialized men, and hard money required to regularly supply the princely falconries with fresh birds of prey.

For early modern falconers, not only the mere fact that falcons were caught but also the precise stage in life at which the animals were captured mattered. Accordingly, the birds were named differently depending on the age at which they were first in human hands—a categorization that also entered natural history books. In Willughby and Ray's *Ornithology*, one could read that

> Hawks in respect of their age are divided by Falconers into I. *Nyas* or *Eiasse-Hawks*, which being taken out of the Nest, or brought away in the Nest before they can fly, are brought up by hand. 2. *Ramage-Hawks* or Branchers, which are taken when they are fledg'd and got out of the Nest, but depart not far from it, flying only from bough to bough, and following their Dams, not being able yet to prey for themselves ….However they be taken, after they have preyed for themselves the first year, while they retain their Chicken-feathers, they are called *Sore-hawks*, from the *French* word *Soret*, signifying a dusky colour.[68]

Charles d'Arcussia's *Fauconnerie* made even more subtle divisions for the first year of a bird's life. Depending on the moment of the animal's capture, he distinguished between '*niais*', '*gentil*', '*pellerin*', and '*passager*' falcons. More mature birds were called '*sors*', '*antenaire*', and finally '*hagard*' (haggard).[69] Consequently, a gyrfalcon that had been taken out of the eyrie shortly after hatching and was then raised by a falconer was called '*Gerfaut Niais*', whereas according to d'Arcussia, a Saker falcon could never be an eyeass because 'no one has ever seen an eyrie of a saker'.[70] As the different examples show, the terms varied between languages and treatises, but the basic distinction between helpless but docile nestlings,

[67] Bert, *Treatise of Hawkes and Hawking* (1619), table of contents, presenting section V. See also Latham, *Falconry* (1633), pp. 33–4, who has a strong preference for haggard falcons. Du Thou, *Hieracosophion* (1582, ed. De Smet), pp. 262–3, also discusses the problem of accommodation for captive gyrfalcons that were fed at the kings' table.

[68] Willughby/Ray, *Ornithology* (1678), p. 69. From the second year of life onwards, the same source distinguishes between 'Entermewers', 'White Hawks', 'Hawks on the first coat', 'Hawks of the second coat', 'Hawks of the third coat', and so forth.

[69] See d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 7–8; Beaufrère, *Lexique de la chasse au vol*, p. 268.

[70] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 49, 113.

inexperienced flying juvenile falcons, and experienced but also wayward haggards is discernible in most writings.[71] This shows that the early modern specialists of birds of prey regarded the moment of capture as a crucial transformative event that would shape the further behaviour of their birds. It was a 'liminal moment' that divided a falcon's life into a (mostly unknown) past life and a future life as a captive animal and courtly subject.[72]

At the beginning of this transformation process, bird catchers played an essential role. Some of them were professional falconers engaged in the trade in birds or sent to promising catching regions for this purpose by their sovereigns. But as the raptors could only be caught in specific seasons, a large number of the falcons were arguably caught by men who worked in other economic sectors such as farming during the rest of the year. On Iceland, the Danish king's professional falconers—mostly of Dutch origin—only received the captured birds and accompanied them on their trip to Copenhagen. Before this, the birds were actually caught and delivered to the King's falcon aviary (*Fálkahúsið*) in Bessastaðir or Reykjavík by local bird catchers whose names figure on the annual catching lists.[73] On 16 July 1745, for instance, a certain Jon Jonson received the sum of 60 Danish rigsdaler for one white, one half-white, and five grey gyrfalcons. Until 29 July, 1,300 rigsdaler (rd.) were paid to twenty different local catchers for a total of twenty-one white (15 rd. each), eleven half-white (10 rd.), and 125 grey (7 rd.) gyrfalcons.[74] These prices do not only mirror the different values of white and grey gyrfalcons. They also give us an impression of the bird's steady increase in value from the first moment of captivity to the moment they were sold on the market or—as in the case of the Icelandic gyrfalcons—handed over as diplomatic gifts. As we will see below, one sometimes had to pay more than 70 Dutch rijksdaalder, or ten times the price paid to Jon Jonson, for a gyrfalcon sold on the public bird market in eighteenth-century Valkenswaard.

In order to catch a falcon, one needed techniques of various degrees of sophistication—and a lot of patience. On Iceland, most of the gyrfalcons were probably caught when they had reached the juvenile 'gentle' age (i.e. shortly after they had left their eyrie for the first time). The trapping of such young birds implied a relatively simple catching method that primarily required local knowledge and perfect timing. In 1752, the Danish commissioner Niels Horrebow

[71] Some falconry treatises like Bert's *Treatise of Hawks and Hawking* ([1619], 1891 edn), pp. 3–7, therefore only distinguish between 'Eyeas', 'Ramish Hawke', and 'Haggart Hawke' as the most basic types. In his *Falconry* (1633 edn), Symon Latham primarily distinguishes between 'Eyas', 'Passenger', and 'Haggard'.

[72] See Weber, 'Liminal Moments', esp. pp. 42, 50.

[73] See the lists in DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.640–42, for the period 1741–79. The 'falcon house' in Reykjavik, built in 1763 a few meters from the seashore, still exists today.

[74] *Allerunderdanigste Reigning over deris Kongelic Maÿestets Falkers Indkiøb her udi Island for dette Aar 1745*, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.640, no. 35. The amounts show that the different value accorded to the different morphs in the treatises on falconry and courtly paintings also led to different payments for the different types of gyrfalcons.

reported that 'there is hardly a falcon-nest in the island that isn't known; for every falcon-catcher in his district takes care to watch them closely, and to place his nets pretty near the place where they build.'[75] Gyrfalcons usually begin to lay their eggs in April with a breeding period of between thirty-four and thirty-six days. As the food for the captured birds was at the trapper's expense and the risk that a dependent nestling would not survive was higher, it is most likely that the trappers waited until the end of June or July to catch the gyrfalcons. At this time, the young birds became independent enough to leave their parents' eyrie but were still easy to catch with nets or simple traps.

For adult migratory birds, much more sophisticated catching techniques were required. The local falcon catchers called the fully white gyrfalcons from Greenland that occasionally arrived in winter at the north-western coast of Iceland 'flying falcons' (*'flyve-falke'*).[76] In order to obtain these most precious birds, they set up traps that looked 'like a fishing net, with a hoop in a semi-circle with a six foot diameter' as Horrebow reported. Then they tied down a ptarmigan, a pigeon, or a hen in its proximity, and hid themselves behind a rock more than one hundred yards away, holding the string attached to the trap and waited. When a 'flight of falcons' approached, the drama of the capture that involved the catcher, the gyrfalcon, and the living decoy began, following a multi-stage script:

> As soon as the falcon sees the bait fluttering on the ground, he takes a few sweeps about in the air just over the place, and looks about to see if there be any danger; then he strikes with such violence, that he takes the bait's head off as clean as if cut off with a knife. The moment he has struck the bait, he generally flies up again, unless very hungry, to look about if any danger be at hand, or any thing to interrupt him in the enjoyment of his prey. In the mean time of his flying up, the falcon-catcher pulls the string and dead bait to the other post close under the net, which the falcon not observing, presently darts to devour his prey, but the other string being pulled, he is catched [*sic*] in the net.[77]

In other regions, similar catching methods were developed and passed on from generation to generation. On the Curonian Spit, local falcon catchers caught peregrine falcons and, in September or October, occasionally passing gyrfalcons from Northern Russia.[78] On several islands of the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean Sea, catchers waited for peregrines and saker falcons that passed

[75] Horrebow, *The Natural History of Iceland* (1758), p. 58. The original Danish text of the account is more detailed; see the chapter on falcons in Horrebow, *Tilforladelige Efterretninger om Island* (1752), pp. 147–54.

[76] Horrebow, *Tilforladelige Efterretninger om Island* (1752), p. 148. The sentence does not appear in the contemporary English translation.

[77] Horrebow, *The Natural History of Iceland* (1758), p. 60.

[78] See Heckmann/Heckmann, 'Falken im Ordensland'.

on their way to Africa, or stayed there as winter guests.[79] On Malta and its neighbouring island Gozo, about twenty falcon trappers, who enjoyed special privileges and provisions by their overlords, set up net traps in specific trapping places (*paragni*) every autumn in order to capture migrating birds of prey.[80]

In Western Europe, the region of Northern Brabant became a hot spot of falcon trapping and commerce. Falconry with peregrine falcons had long been practised in the Netherlands, and even after the separation from the Spanish monarchy in the late sixteenth century, the stadtholders of the House of Orange maintained a princely falconry within the republican United Provinces.[81] More importantly, however, falconry developed into a lucrative export business for the Dutch during this period. Falcon catchers from the village of Varkenswaard, which literally means 'area of pigs' (*varken*), used a complicated but effective method to capture passing peregrine falcons ('*slechtvalks*') in autumn. They were so successful that many of them were engaged by princes to catch gyrfalcons in Norway or Sweden and to serve as royal falconers at their courts.[82] The small town itself became a centre of falcon commerce in the seventeenth century and hence changed its name to *Valkens*waard: the area of falcons.[83]

The trapping method of the Dutch falconers reveals the importance of animal agency for early modern bird catchers. In order to catch the migrating peregrines, they set up complex arrangements that included sophisticated trapping instruments and a whole team of animal assistants, whose cooperation required different degrees of coercion. The basic falcon trap consisted of a turf hut roofed with a cartwheel where the catcher hid himself, several poles equipped with decoys to attract the interest of the passing peregrines, and up to three semi-circular bow nets to catch the bird, which were linked to the catcher's hut with lines.[84] A captured falcon, one or two domestic pigeons, and several wooden mock-ups, all connected with the catcher through strings, served to attract the passing peregrines's attention both optically and acoustically, and to drive the falcon to the trapping nets.

When the falcon was approaching, a great grey shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) that was positioned on a shelter near the catcher's hut began to play his signalling role.

[79] For the Greek islands, see Arbel, 'Venice and Kytherian Falcons'.

[80] On the practice of falcon capture on Malta and Gozo, see Fiorini, 'The Maltese Falcon'; Fenech, *Fatal Flight*, pp. 22–23, 104–5; and the details about the traps given in Abela, *Della descrittione di Malta* (1647), p. 134.

[81] On falconry in the Netherlands, see Swaen, *De valkerij in de Nederlanden* and the recent exhibition catalogue *The Lure of Falconry*.

[82] See Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*; Bö, *Falcon Catching in Norway*, pp. 60–72; and below, Chapter 4.2.

[83] Freriks, 'Bird Trapping and Falconry', p. 1151.

[84] For a contemporary description of this method, see the mid-eighteenth-century manuscript manual written by Dutch falconers at the Ansbach court: 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, pp. 101–16. In addition, see Freriks, 'Bird Trapping and Falconry', pp. 1152–3; Oorschot, *Vorsteliijke vliegers*, pp. 55–62.

Through the bird's excitement, the falconer—who could still not see the peregrine high up in the sky—knew that the moment had come to set the whole apparatus of the trap in motion. He tugged the first line so that a wooden falcon 'attacked' a fake pigeon. When the falcon in the air recognized the presence of potential prey, he turned and began to attack the living pigeon on the ground. In this moment, the trapper yanked another line in order to lure the falcon closer to the trap, remaining cautious that the raptor neither saw the line nor himself. Then, the final act of the indirect encounter between trapper and falcon could begin:

> When he [the falcon] has caught the pigeon outside the hoop, you pull him cautiously towards the pole, so that he does not see the string. Once he is standing in front of the pole, you attach the pigeon line to the hut in a manner that makes it impossible for the falcon to move backwards, and you take the line of the hoop into your hand. Then you pull firmly and he is caught.[85]

At the moment of capture, the falcons lost most of the agency attributed to them, at least for a while. Surely, the falconer had to be very careful when removing the bird from the net, 'for fear of breaking any of his feathers in the wing or tail'[86]—a piece of advice that still points to the possible resistance of the captured bird. Yet, as soon as the bird's vision was blocked, the falcon lost its orientation and became virtually immobile. From the falconer's perspective, the leather hood was a perfect tool to handle the untamed bird with its pointed beak and sharp claws: 'You can let him stand forever under the hood if it is made the right way.'[87] Tied with leather ties to a bar or rectangular 'cadge', the captured bird was at the mercy of the catcher and other humans that took care of it.

From the individual bird's perspective, the capture was a truly 'liminal moment' that marked the beginning of a new life in human captivity. However, it would be misleading to say that this moment transformed previously wild animals into domestic ones. The capture was only the first (albeit decisive) of a series of moments that transformed the individual falcon and its relationship to a human-dominated environment. This was neither an irreversible process nor necessarily one of gradual disempowerment. As we will see in the next chapter, the birds later regained part of their independence and became members of a heterogeneous social figuration marked by interdependencies. Yet, before these transformations into social subjects at court could take place, the captive birds of prey served as objects of economic and political exchange that could take them hundreds of kilometres away from the place they had been caught.

[85] 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, pp. 116–17.
[86] Horrebow, *The Natural History of Iceland* (1758), p. 60.
[87] 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, p. 118.

1.4 The Global Traffic in Captive Birds of Prey

Falcons became objects of exchange in the purest sense of the word when they were traded for money. Hanseatic merchants played a key role in the bird trade between the countries of the North and the continent in the late medieval period, and at the end of the sixteenth century, we still find gyrfalcons, peregrines, merlin falcons, and other birds of prey in their account books. In the 1580s, the merchant Matthias Hoep from Hamburg hired falcon trappers to catch birds in northern Germany and on Iceland, paying them 5.75 daler for an ordinary '*falck*' (i.e. a peregrine) and up to 20 daler for a white female gyrfalcon. Then Hoep sold the captured birds of prey for considerable prices to London and other capital cities; in 1584, Hoep traded no less than 182 birds in total.[88] At the same time, saker, peregrine, and Eleanora's falcons captured on Eastern Mediterranean islands travelled on commercial ships to the port of Venice, from where they were sold for high prices to princely courts. On his return trip from the Holy Land, the Swiss pilgrim Heinrich Wölfli (1470–1532) had found himself on a ship with about 150 falcons from Crete that travelled with him to Venice and were said to be 'of great value all over Europe'.[89]

From the opposite geographic direction, the new commercial routes to the West Indies (Southern America) led to an influx of new species to Europe. Among them were captured birds of prey with orange breast called '*Aleps*', '*Alethes*', or '*Aletos*', most probably aplomado falcons (*Falco femoralis*).[90] These exotic raptors, which could chase pheasants or partridges, soon became fashionable among princes and members of the high nobility. According to d'Arcussia, the birds, 'having a great reputation now for their rarity and gaiety', were sold on the market for the enormous sum of 300 écus, the equivalent of 900 livres or 300 Reichsthaler.[91] These examples show that captive raptors of distant origins were highly valued on a partly globalized market for both their hunting performance and their exotic aspect.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, the commerce in birds of prey seems to have become a more specialized business. Common merchants trading with diverse goods gradually retired from the challenging activity of dealing with

[88] Mehler/Küchelmann/Holtermann, 'The Export of Gyrfalcons', pp. 1003–8, numbers on p. 1008. On the falcon trade in London, see Grassby, 'The Decline of Falconry', pp. 44–5.

[89] Wölfli, *Reise nach Jerusalem* (ed. Bloesch), p. 79. I am indebted to Sundar Henny for pointing out this source. On the falcon trade in the Mediterranean, which was also used by Venetian diplomats, see Arbel, 'Venice and Kytherian Falcons'; Arbel, 'Cypriot Wildlife in Renaissance Writings', pp. 323–4; Arbel, 'Daily Life on Board', p. 202. On Venice's role in the trade of Nordic gyrfalcons, see also Alkhateeb Shehada, 'From the Far North to the Near East'.

[90] See Nelson, 'In Search of l'Alethe', who revises older hypotheses that had identified the ominous falcons mentioned in various sources around 1600 with the orange-breasted falcon (*Falcon deiroleucus*) or the collared forest falcon (*Micrastur semitorquatus*).

[91] D'Arcussia, *La fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 56–7.

captured falcons, while professional falcon traders supplied Europe's capitals with captive birds of prey. In 1637, four falconers from Brabant formed an association in Paris 'for buying, selling, keeping, and catching' falcons. In a contract, they stipulated that they would take birds 'out of their nests' in Provence and elsewhere and sell them on the market, sharing the costs for travel as well as trapping, food, and care.[92] This specialization mirrors the importance of specific know-how that was needed to handle these sensitive living goods.

Moreover, the emergence of a falcon market also points to important changes in demand. During these decades, falconry became more and more 'curialized', while the common nobles gradually disappeared from the market as buyers of falcons. Therefore, the commercial falconers were now explicitly obliged to present their birds first to the king's *grand fauconnier* who could choose 'those birds he requires, or that the king lacks for his pleasure'.[93] At about the same time at which the four Dutchmen formed their association in Paris, King Louis XIII also engaged a special commissioner—a certain Monsieur Boucher de Fréville—to buy gyrfalcons from Iceland in Copenhagen.[94] Simultaneously, the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II regularly sent his Dutch falconer Gisbrecht Arzen to the Netherlands in order to procure captured peregrines for his falconry at the Viennese court.[95]

By the eighteenth century, Valkenswaard had become the unchallenged hotspot in the European traffic in falcons. In autumn, princely falconers from all over Europe flocked to the small Dutch town in order to supply their sovereigns' falconries with suitable birds. Not only peregrines that had been caught in the area, but also Nordic gyrfalcons caught in Norway, herons used as game birds, and falconry equipment such as hoods and bells could be bought there. At public sales, the birds were auctioned to the highest bidder. Prices varied significantly depending on the demand, the quality of the birds, and the number of falcons that had been caught in the season. In September 1772, for instance, the falconer and agent Jean L'Hertrois informed the Imperial Master of the Hawks in Vienna that this season only few '*jeerstück*' (i.e. gyrfalcons) and not a single haggard were for sale. Hence, for the birds that were going to be auctioned ('*gelottet*'), the costs would be very high: 725 Dutch rijksdaalder for eight gyrfalcons, or more than 90

[92] Contract, dated Paris, 23 March 1637, AN, MC/ET/XXXIX/69, Minutes M. Menard Père, 1637, no. 70.

[93] Louis de Jaucourt, art. 'Fauconnier', *Encyclopédie*, ed. Diderot/d'Alembert, vol. 6, pp. 432–4, quote p. 432.

[94] See AN, MC/ET/XXXIV/34, Minutes Jean Dupuy, 7 March 1625. In this document, Boucher de Fréville's job is described as 'commis par Sa Majesté pour le choix des oiseaux de fauconnerie qui se prennent en Danemark'. At the same time, he also received a pension from the King of Denmark.

[95] See, e.g., the passports dated 1624 and 1635 for the falconer and 'the birds he has with him' ('mit denen beÿ sich habenden Vögeln') in HHStA RHR, Passbriefe 1, A–Ba, Fz. 1, fols. 178 (13 June 1624) and 180 (28 June 1635).

rijksdaalder per bird.[96] Whereas in the previous year, seventeen captured birds of prey including seven Nordic gyrfalcons had made their way from Valkenswaard to Vienna and Laxenburg, the emperor's master falconer Count Saint Julien decided to buy only ten birds that year due to the unfavourable development of prices.[97]

Fortunately for the royal falconries, they were not fully dependent on the fluctuations of the market but had additional sources to ensure a regular supply. In the early 1770s, Count Saint Julian could easily decide not to buy falcons from Valkenswaard because he knew that falcons and game birds caught in the eastern Habsburg territories were already on their way to his court. In the same season when their colleagues went to Valkenswaard to look for suitable and affordable birds, other falconers in the service of Emperor Joseph II and Empress Maria Theresa travelled to Hungary and Bohemia to catch or purchase birds of prey. On 21 October 1773, the falconers Philipp Wurst and Michael Stadler came back from Hungary with seventeen captured '*Schlechtfalken*' (probably peregrines), of which three were tiercels. In the same month, another eighteen female falcons plus fourteen tiercels and no less than fifty-four kites (to be used as game birds) and five kite eggs arrived at Laxenburg.[98]

In France, the royal *gardes des aires* (eyrie guards) in Burgundy and other regions were not only responsible for the protection of breeding birds of prey, but also supplied the court with falcons and goshawks every year. In a ceremony held annually on 22 July, the *gardes des aires* presented themselves and their captured birds at the royal court and received a gratification of 300 livres for their service.[99] Moreover, some 'feudal' customs that stipulated the delivery of captured birds of prey to the sovereign remained in practice. Until the end of the *ancien régime* in France, the Abbé de Saint-Hubert was still obliged to annually hand over to the king a couple of hunting dogs and birds of prey caught in the Ardennes. However, the abbot now preferred to refer to this transfer as a '*présent*' to the king instead of a tax due to the sovereign[100]—a different type of social and political exchange in which falcons were involved.

[96] Jean L'Hertroy to His Excellency [Count Saint Julien], Valkenswaard, 30 September 1772, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 2 (1772), no. 46.

[97] See ibid., Fasz. 1 (1771), no. 34 (sign. Martschläger, Vienna, 5 October 1771), and Fasz. 2 (1772), no. 49 (reply to L'Hertroy, Vienna, 16 October 1772).

[98] Martschläger to Heron Master Johan Georg Rabel, Vienna, 21 and 24 October 1773, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 3 (1773), nos 47–8 and 57 (listing the payments to the falconers). On the history of falconry and bird-catching in Hungary, see Vönöczky-Schenk, 'Die Geschichte der ungarischen Falknerei'.

[99] See the lists of payments in AN, O 1 977, nos 295–316 (1760–79). In 1780, the offices of the *gardes des aires* were abolished in order to relieve the royal budget; see Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, p. 636.

[100] See *Mercure de France*, November 1766, p. 201. For other examples, see also De Smet, *La fauconnerie à la Renaissance*, p. 54.

A considerable number of the falcons that served early modern rulers came to the court as diplomatic gifts.[101] Falcons had already been preferred gifts among rulers in the Medieval period. Political players of northern Europe such as the Norwegian kings and the Teutonic Knights sent birds as diplomatic gifts to princes all over the continent in order to strengthen their diplomatic relations.[102] Yet in the early modern period, these exchanges reached new levels of intensity and became much more regular. While the kings of Denmark used falcons from Iceland and Norway as a natural resource for political purposes or economic policy, the Russian grand dukes and czars also monopolized the catching of gyrfalcons and saker falcons on their territories and sent the living gifts to rulers in Europe, Asia, and the Arabic world.[103] The dukes of Prussia had been active players in European falcon diplomacy in the sixteenth century, and their electoral and royal successors of the house of Brandenburg also occasionally used falcons as gifts.[104] Similarly, the States-General of the Netherlands used their access to well-trained peregrine falcons to aid their diplomacy with Europe's most powerful monarchs.[105]

Along with northern Europe, the Mediterranean was a favoured source of fresh falcons for European courts. Since the Renaissance, the Republic of Venice used its dependent territories as a pool to organize the capture of falcons, part of which was sent to the Ottoman sultan and to European princes.[106] The Republic of Ragusa also regularly sent captured falcons to their protectors, first the Ottoman sultan and then the Holy Roman Emperor.[107] And finally, the Knights of Saint John, after having been forced to cede the islands of Cyprus and Rhodes to the expanding Ottoman Empire, continued to capture and distribute falcons from their new home base, the island of Malta—a practice that would remain vital for them until the end of the eighteenth century.[108] As a consequence, prominent European sovereigns such as the king of France and the Holy Roman

[101] For an overview on the role of animals in the history of diplomacy, see Weber, 'Diplomatic History'; on their role as gifts esp. pp. 197–201; Weber, 'Lebende Geschenke'.

[102] See Paravicini, 'Tiere aus dem Norden', pp. 564–6; Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, p. 36; Knabe, 'Beizjagd und politische Falkengeschenke'; Kaestner, 'Tiere als Mittel der Repräsentation'.

[103] See Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, p. 251; Shergalin, 'Gyrfalcon Trappers in the Russian Arctic'.

[104] See Heckmann, 'Preußische Jagdfalken', and the documents in GStAPK, 1. HA, Rep. 36, no. 2325.

[105] For example, in 1629, they gifted a dozen falcons to the French King Louis XIII. Swaen, *De valkerij in de Nederlanden*, p. 92.

[106] Arbel, 'Cypriot Wildlife in Renaissance Writings', p. 324.

[107] See *Wienersches Diarium*, 8 November 1713, p. 6, on the 'annally dued 12 falcons' that had been handed over by the consul of Ragusa in Naples to the Vice-King Count of Daun as a representative of the Habsburg Emperor Charles VI. Since 1684, the republic had to pay tribute to the Austrian ruler.

[108] Fiorini, 'The Maltese Falcon'. Already from Rhodes, the knights of the Order of St John and Jerusalem regularly sent gift falcons to European princes. In 1498, for instance, eighty falcons arrived per ship in Venice to be gifted to the king of France, the duke of Savoy, and the duke of Milan; see Sanuto, *I diarii*, vol. 2, p. 154, 26 November 1498. I am indebted to Stefano Condorelli for this information.

Emperor simultaneously received gift falcons from the far north, the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea.

The early modern practice of announcing and registering living gifts allows for a more detailed reconstruction of the species, numbers, and transportation circumstances of the presented falcons. Whereas the Danish king's falconers distinguished between 'white', 'half-white', and 'grey' gyrfalcons that were caught on Iceland, the letters in which the Grand Masters of Malta announced their falcon gifts give an even more nuanced picture of falcon species. Thus, in the letters sent to the French court between 1637 and 1713, eighteen different categories of captured birds are mentioned, ranging from a '*sacre sor*' (saker falcon before her first moult) to several '*lanerets de Russie*' (male lanner falcons 'from Russia') and to the far more common '*faucons pèlerin*' (peregrine falcons).[109] Malta's special position in the southern Mediterranean, on the route of several species of falcons migrating to North Africa in the autumn, proved to be a godsend for the Knights, who also recorded the capture of several species of falcons in their descriptions of the island.[110]

For the Knights of Malta, therefore, the name and symbolic value of the falcons differed according to their origin, which was probably determined by where on the island they were caught. However, if we describe the different falcons using today's nomenclature, and ignore sex and age, it turns out that about four-fifths of the falcons sent in were most probably peregrine falcons.[111] Lanner falcons (14 per cent) and saker falcons (5 per cent) were thus much rarer by comparison. Taking into account that the Maltese were eager to select the most wanted species for their presents to France (which is the main reason why eight out of ten gifted falcons were female), the quota of the peregrines in the annual catches may have been even higher. With two lanner falcons and eight peregrines with a ratio of nine females for one male, 1704 was not a bad but a rather average year. Despite the fact that a precious saker falcon was missing, the dissatisfaction expressed by the Grand Master in his letter to Louis XIV quoted at the beginning of this chapter was therefore mainly rhetorical.

On their journeys to the royal courts, however, the precious birds were exposed to risks that could cause real dissatisfaction in their donators and recipients. In November 1712, the Chevalier de l'Epine boarded a ship with six hooded lanners

[109] See AAE, CP Malte, vols 1–4. For the quotes, see the letter to Cardinal Richelieu, dated 22 October 1641, in vol. 1, fol. 229, and the letter to the King of France, dated 12 November 1688, in vol. 3, fol. 36. For the annual catch figures between 1680 and 1713, see 'Supplementary Materials', Fig. 2, https://doi.org/10.48620/88108.

[110] In his *Description of Malta*, Giovanni Francesco Abela distinguishes between *falconi*, *peregrini*, *sagri* [saker falcons], *smerigli* [merlin falcons], and *sparaieri* [sparrowhawks] that were caught regularly on the island; see Abela, *Della descrizzione di Malta* (1674), p. 234.

[111] For the different variants or subspecies of peregrine falcons, which also differ morphologically, see White/Cade/Enderson, *Peregrine Falcons*, esp. pp. 13–37, who distinguish eighteen to twenty geographical groups of peregrine falcons and describe them separately.

'from Sicily' and four peregrine falcons including one tiercel, destined as gifts to the king of France.[112] Yet, the birds never arrived at the court of Versailles. In January 1713, a few months before the peace treaty of Utrecht was signed, the secretary of state for foreign affairs, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, marquis de Torcy, was informed that the Chevalier de l'Epine and his birds had suffered a 'sad accident'. On their way to Marseille, they had been attacked and captured by Dutch corsairs. Thanks to the French king's intervention, the chevalier was finally freed and received the customary gratification due to those who handed over the living Maltese gifts, but it seems that some of the birds did not survive the double captivity, whereas others were probably sold on the Dutch bird markets. In the following year, the Grand Master thus hoped that the new falcons 'will be luckier than those last year and can please Your Majesty'.[113]

Even without the appearance of corsairs, pirates, and other kinds of thieves, travelling was a risky business in the early modern period and could be fatal for the sensitive captive birds. Detained from flying and moving, exposed to noise and unhealthy air, and fed with meat of varying quality, they were always at risk of falling ill during travel. Therefore, falconry authors such as Charles d'Arcussia warned their readers not to buy falcons caught in distant places and 'brought along by people who have ill-treated them'. Instead, he recommended buying local birds of prey 'that have not been tormented so much'.[114] Yet for the royal courts, renouncing the prestigious falcons from abroad was not a satisfactory solution. Nevertheless, constant concern about the birds' health is evident in numerous letters discussing issues of bird transportation and in the invention of special contraptions to convey captured falcons safely from one place to another. For instance, gyrfalcons caught in the Dvina region in northern Russia travelled in special closed and upholstered boxes that were attached to sledges. On their way to Moscow, the raptors were regularly fed with fresh reindeer meat.[115]

At the same time, gyrfalcons that were caught on Iceland made their way from Bessastaðir and later Reykjavík to Copenhagen on a specially equipped 'falcon ship', closely supervised by the so-called itinerant falconer of the Danish king and his servants.[116] On board the ship, the birds were placed on a row of poles covered with cushions made of hay and wool into which they could sink their talons, so that they would stand securely when the sea was rough. Together with the falcons, dozens of living farm animals—oxen, lambs, and chicken—were loaded onto the ships to provide fresh meat during the journey. After the arrival of the falcon ship in Copenhagen, the gyrfalcons were moved to the royal

[112] See Grand Master Perellos y Roccaful to King Louis XIV, Malta [Valletta], 26 November 1712, AAE, CP Malte, vol. 4, fol. 154, and the following correspondence.

[113] The Grand Master to the King of France, Malta, 2 January 1713, AAE, CP Malte, vol. 4, fol. 226.

[114] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 25–6. On the problems of the forced mobility of falcons and the solutions devised to solve these problems in daily court life under Francis I of France, see Schmidt, 'Falkenhaltung und das Problem der Mobilität', from which I quote.

[115] Shergalin, 'Gyrfalcon Trappers in the Russian Arctic', p. 275.

[116] See Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, pp. 69–74.

Falconeergaarden (falconers' garden) in Frederiksberg. Under the direction of the royal Master of the Hunt, the birds had to pass another health check and were then selected to be transported in coaches or on riverboats to different courtly destinations in Europe. When the falconers travelled on foot, the hooded falcons were tied to rectangular wooden frames and covered with cushions, called cadges (Figure 1.7), to prevent them from falling and getting hurt.

Despite these efforts to increase the birds' safety and comfort, death and illness were constant companions on the long trips to princely courts. The longer the journey, the higher the risk that the birds would not arrive safely at their destination. In their reports to the Danish court, the itinerant falconers repeatedly discussed storms and rough seas and their negative effects on the well-being of the precious birds. On 17 September 1752, for instance, Hendrick Verhagen reported to the master of the hunt that the falcons from Iceland had arrived on the previous day after six weeks at sea. Having been exposed to 'many storms, two of them have perished during the trip, and one or two others are in very bad shape.'[117] If we compare the numbers of gyrfalcons registered by the king's falconers on Iceland with those recorded in Copenhagen, we see that a certain number of birds was lost on every trip from Iceland to the Danish capital. In 1745, for instance, 156 out of 161 birds arrived in Copenhagen (of which 151 were distributed); in 1765, 153 out of 156; in 1775, thirty-five out of thirty-six. Overall, this means that a relatively high number of falcons (more than 95 per cent) usually survived the trip on the falcon ship in the mid-eighteenth century.[118]

After their departure from Copenhagen, however, the health of many Nordic gyrfalcons decreased dramatically. Every autumn, a letter from Copenhagen that contained a feather of every individual falcon—in order to allow precise identification and to prevent fraud—informed the princely courts how many birds of which type they would receive that year.[119] Knowing how many living gifts had been on the road, the courts had to accept constant losses. In 1733, Christoph Ehrenfried von Pöllnitz, master falconer of the Margrave of Ansbach, informed his colleague in Copenhagen that three out of the seven gyrfalcons sent in the previous autumn had already died in Valkenswaard, the place where they should have been handed over to continue their journey to southern Germany.[120] Some months later, the five gyrfalcons who had arrived at the margrave's court all died

[117] Hendrich Verhagen to the Master of the Hunt, Carl Christian von Gramm, Copenhagen, 17 September 1752, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.639: Falkejagtsager 1741–63, no. 23.

[118] Data from DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.640–45. The annual difference was between one and five birds or 0.36 per cent and 8.05 per cent, which makes up an average loss rate of 3.78 per cent.

[119] The correspondence between the Danish Master of the hunt and various European courts is recorded in DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.633–8 and 643–8, and in various European archives.

[120] *Oberstfalkenmeister* von Pöllnitz to the Master of the Hunt von Gram, Onolzbach, 25 June 1733, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.637, Lit. K.

Joh. El. Ridinger inv. del. et exc. Aug. Vind.
Mart. Elias Ridinger Sculps.
Falcken Junge mit der Chatsche.
Garcon portant les faucons sur le brācard.

Figure 1.7 *Falconer with cadge*, engraving by Johann E. and Martin E. Ridinger, *c.*1750. This engraving was printed in Augsburg as part of a series of twenty-four 'hunting scenes' showing hunters and falconers at various activities of their profession. This image shows a young falconer carrying six valuable hooded falcons on a cadge (*Chatsche*)

Source: New York Public Library, Digital Collections, image ID 415121, no. b14009424.

within a few weeks—an event that 'greatly affected His Princely Highness who is a great amateur of these birds'.[121]

The following years brought further disappointments. In 1736, the *Oberstfalkenmeister* lamented that his master's falconry was in 'fatal circumstances' after many deaths and a supply of only six grey falcons that year.[122] In 1737, three out of eight gyrfalcons from Iceland died immediately after having been presented by the Danish king's falconer to the margrave, and the master of the hawks assumed that 'of the remaining five [birds] few will pull through'.[123] Other sovereigns such as the king of France were less afflicted by the fate of the gifted falcons, but nevertheless, the constant loss of precious birds was also noted in Versailles. In 1741, the chief of the French king's cabinet falconry expressed his hope that 'illness will not strike down [the birds arriving in the future] as much as it has in the past years, and that they will please His Majesty who considers them beautiful'.[124]

Thus, the oversea and overland journeys were fatal for many captive birds of prey. From a modern perspective, we can conclude that several interdependent factors caused the steady decline of the foreign falcons' health during their transportation. Captured as juvenile birds in June or July, the gyrfalcons from Iceland arrived in Vienna in December or January. During this long journey, the untamed birds had to sit on their bars for most of the time. Due to this immobilization, their bodily fitness decreased and their flying apparatus could not develop, while their sensitive lungs were prone to infections.[125] Moreover, the conditions of transport on horseback, on riverboats, or in coaches, constantly exposed the captive falcons to unknown stimuli, which caused additional stress. The limited possibilities to procure proper food was also a potential factor inducing illness on the road, not to mention the harm caused to the Arctic birds when they were transported to the south in overheated coaches or boxes. D'Arcussia was therefore certainly right to warn his readers that the health of falcons that had endured long-distance transportation might be compromised.

Given these unsuitable travel conditions, it seems remarkable that a large proportion of bound and blinded captive birds nevertheless survived the long journeys to the courts. Once there, they regained some of their freedom of movement and, at least in some cases, became powerful agents in the princes' hunts.

Rulers and Raptors: Falcons in Courtly Europe, 1600–1793. Nadir Weber, Oxford University Press.
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[121] Von Pöllnitz to Gram, Onolzbach, 18 June 1734, ibid.
[122] Von Pöllnitz to Gram, Friisdorff, 27 September 1736, ibid. ('fatalen Umständen').
[123] Von Pöllnitz to Gram, Onolzbach, 28 December 1737, ibid.
[124] Jean-Claude de Forget to Gram, Versailles, 7 November 1741, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.643.
[125] Away from their natural habitats, Nordic gyrfalcons were especially threatened by *Aspergillosis*, a lung disease caused by bacteria and a major cause of death for captive gyrfalcons to the present day; see Brüll/Trommer, eds, *Die Beizjagd*, pp. 111–12; Ciesielski, *Der Gerfalke*, p. 56.

2
Living at Court

The high expenses of the royal court were already a controversial issue in France when the Chevalier Jean-Claude III de Forget (1757–1792), who had just succeeded his father as head of the king's cabinet falconry, handed in a list that detailed the annual costs of his services in 1783.[1] The total sum of 29,578 livres and 10 sous included not only the considerable costs for salaries and clothes for twelve falconers, six cadge carriers, and three grooms for the stables. Forty birds that had been bought for 36 livres each made up a sum of 1,400 livres. For the 'food for fifty birds, including those of Denmark and Malta', the king spent 3,600 livres. Whereas the expenses for 'hoods, gloves, bells, rings, colourful feathers, leashes, fumigations, medication, perches, transport' remained relatively modest (250 livres) and the costs of 'circa one thousand eggs for the birds' insignificant (50 livres), the 500 dozen pigeons, used for training and feeding the falcons, cost the considerable amount of 1,500 livres. Finally, the purchase, feeding, and equipment of sixteen horses and six dogs added another 10,398 livres to the annual budget of the king's cabinet falconry.

If we compare these numbers with a worker's annual income in pre-revolutionary France (*c.*200 livres), we get an impression of the costs of courtly animal keeping under the *ancien régime*.[2] The economic impact of animal presence at court becomes clearer if we take into consideration that the French court entertained another falconry—the *Grande Fauconnerie*—besides the cabinet falconry as well as two separate royal stables and a hunting organization that was composed of several departments, which together cost several million livres every year and therefore had their share in the state's increasing deficits—a subject of public debate.[3] Yet for the Chevalier de Forget, the real scandal was that a substantial part of the money spent for the royal raptors was not covered by the crown's payments, which could conceivably make him 'go into debt' like his father and

[1] 'Tableau de la recette et de la dépense annuelle de la fauconnerie du cabinet, commandée par le chevalier de Forget', 1783, AN, O 1 977, no. 146.

[2] See Sgard, 'L'échelle des revenues', p. 426. However, compared to the revenue and spendings of a member of the high nobility, the total sum is still modest.

[3] According to Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, pp. 213, 217, the costs of the *Grande Écurie* were estimated at 494,094 livres in 1782, while in the same year, the costs of the *Petite Écurie*—which included the king's coaches—amounted to an impressive 2,613,545 livres. At the same time, the costs of the different sections of the *Vénerie du Roi* were estimated at more than one million livres (p. 615). Together, this made up almost a fifth of the annual costs of the royal court.

predecessor Jean-Claude II who had been forced to take a credit of 60,000 livres for this purpose.[4]

Beyond these financial details, the chevalier's list also contains valuable information about the living conditions of captive raptors at early modern courts. It points to the fact that a complex organization was at work to ensure the captive birds' well-being and training—an organization that brought together courtly caretakers, material equipment, architectural arrangements, and various sorts of animals. As the court as a whole, the princely falconries were spaces of multispecies cohabitation. This chapter will reconstruct the birds' living conditions in these spaces and show how the captive birds of prey gradually turned into courtly hunting assistants.

2.1 Public Presentation and Animal Spaces

There were different ways in which falcons came to court. Birds that had been captured by the royal falconers or purchased on the market were brought directly to the princely falconries, which were usually situated at some distance from the residences. The sovereign would only take note of them when they were deployed for a princely hunt. The arrival of the precious Icelandic and Maltese gifts, however, was quite a different matter. In eighteenth-century Vienna, attentive courtiers could closely follow the journey of the gyrfalcons from Iceland to the Habsburg-Austrian capital by reading the *Wienerische Diarium*. The printed gazette regularly announced the arrival of the falcon ship in Copenhagen. Then it informed its readers that the 'Danish falconers, with 16 falcons that the King of Denmark will present to His Roman Imperial Majesty, have arrived here [in Berlin] to continue their journey on to Vienna.'[5] After their arrival in the city, the birds were solemnly presented to the emperor who then 'expressed his particular pleasure' at seeing the beautiful birds.[6] When an ambassador from Denmark was present at the ceremony, he could personally accept a considerable number of bottles of Tokaij wine as an exchange gift in the name of his sovereign.[7]

[4] J.-C. de Forget to the *Secrétaire d'État à la Maison du Roi*, Antoine Jean Amelot de Chaillou, undated (*c.*1783), AN O 1 977, no. 147. According to Forget, the falconry's deficit was almost 3,000 livres per year.

[5] *Wienerisches Diarium*, no. 52, 15 November 1752, p. 10, report dated Berlin, 31 October 1752. On the arrival of the falcon ship, see, e.g., *Wienerschies Diarium*, no. 81, 10 October 1753, report from Copenhagen, 11 September.

[6] Quoted from a letter from the *Obristfalkenmeister* Saint Julien to the Count of Hollstein, *Grand veneur* of the King of Denmark, 7 November 1787, after the presentation of twelve Icelandic falcons on the same day (HHStA HA OJäA 858, no. 21, 'besonders Vergnügen bezeuget').

[7] When the gift exchange could not take place *in situ*, the gifts in return were presented by the emperor's envoy in Copenhagen. See, e.g., the letter addressed from Vienna to the *Conseiller de légation* in Copenhagen, Baron of Collenbach, 1 March 1785, HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 15, no. 4.

At the court of Versailles, the gift falcons from Denmark and Malta were also publicly handed over to the French king. During the reign of Louis XIV, the Icelandic gyrfalcons were occasionally handed over at the New Year's reception at Versailles. In the presence of the *corps diplomatique*, the *princes du sang*, and other courtiers, the ambassador of Denmark then stepped forward and handed over the most beautiful falcon to the *grand fauconnier* de France, who would then set the bird on the glove of His Majesty.[8] The other gift falcons that were present at the ceremony sat on the fists of the travelling falconer from Denmark and the French king's falconers. Also for the Knights of Malta, the handing over of the gift falcons was an important occasion to meet the king in person. In 1782, the *Mercure de France* reported from Versailles that on 24 May 'the Bailli de Bréteuil, ambassador of Malta, presented to His Majesty the falcons that the Grand Master of the order sends to the king every year.'[9] In the presence of the court, the living gifts were handed over by the Chevalier d'Andalarre, a Maltese knight, to the *grand fauconnier*, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, and the *capitaine du vol du cabinet*, the Marquis de Forget. While the Maltese Knights continued to accept money as a gratuity for the travelling knight, the Danish diplomacy successfully negotiated a more honourable exchange gift that passed from sovereign to sovereign: four thousand bottles of *vin de Bourgogne* and champagne.[10]

The ceremonies of gift exchange not only reinforced diplomatic relationships but were also liminal moments that transformed the social status of the falcons from objects of exchange to courtly creatures. At least on the semantic level, the handing over of the falcons resembled the first *présentation* of young noblemen to the king.[11] At the moment when the sovereign took note of, and in some cases even touched them, the falcons were publicly recognized as the prince's animals. This symbolic transformation from a gift to an animal member of the court found its material expression when the birds were given rings, leashes, and hoods bearing the initials of the sovereign. In a similar way to the hunting uniforms worn by their falconers, this equipment made them recognizable as members of the court.

Moreover, the newly arrived falcons usually received individual names. While names such as *La Perle* ('The Pearl') or *Tilburger* ('From Tilburg') referred to the physical appearance or the geographic origins of the birds, other names such as *La Baronne* ('The Baroness') and *Le Gentilhomme* ('The Gentleman') underlined the raptors' 'courtliness'.[12] In accordance with their prestige, the white

[8] Charliat, 'Les oiseaux du Nord', p. 122.

[9] *Mercure de France*, 6 April 1782, p. 20, dated Versailles, 2 April.

[10] See Geffroy, ed., *Danemark*, p. 155; Charliat, 'Les oiseaux du Nord', pp. 123–4; Charliat, 'Documents inédits sur les faucons'.

[11] On the significance of this practice, see Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, p. 124. In France, the royal hunts were a preferred occasion for a formal introduction to the king; see Salvadori, *La chasse*, p. 205.

[12] For a list of documented falcon names from the courts of France, Cologne, and Hesse-Kassel with information on species affiliation and sex, see 'Supplementary Materials', Fig. 3, https://doi.org/10.48620/88108.

gyrfalcons from Iceland usually received names that referred to top positions at court and the society of princes, such as *Princesse Eislender* ('Princess Icelander') *Der König* ('The King'), or even *Kayser* ('Emperor'). Certain names such as *Landgraf* ('Landgrave') and *Landgräfin* ('Landgravine') at the Court of Hesse-Kassel were repeatedly given to white—and mostly female—gyrfalcons from Iceland, evidently expressing a position of special favour within the princely falconry that was supplanted by a successor once an individual bird with that name had died.[13] Thus, the birds were 'subjectivated' in the double sense of the word: they were transformed into animal subjects of the prince that had to perform certain roles *and* into individuals that could be observed, addressed, and commemorated.[14]

Once they had been accepted as members of the courtly living sphere, the falcons spent most of their life in architectural settings that were especially designed to host the precious birds. These 'animal spaces' were usually termed falconry (*Falknerei, fauconnerie*), like the hunt with trained raptors and the courtly organization that was responsible for it.[15] The reconstruction of what the daily life of courtly raptors might have been like is a challenging task, as detailed written or visual sources are scarce. Moreover, the falconry buildings and rooms in which the birds were placed usually no longer exist.[16] This physical disappearance of the royal falconries can be partly explained by the use of ephemeral construction material—wood rather than stone in order to avoid humidity—but is also a consequence of the decline of the practice of falconry at the end of the eighteenth century, decades before the residences turned into museums.

The French cabinet falconry offers a good example to discuss the spatial organization of falconry at European courts. Its evolution mirrors the general tendency towards an institutionalization, but also a stricter separation of the 'animal spaces' from the living sphere of humans in early modern court life. At times when the French monarchy was itinerant, not only horses and mules but also selected hounds and falcons remained closer to the social centre because they accompanied the king on his journeys. Although the care for part of the king's birds of prey seems to have been outsourced to certain specialists under the reign

[13] The gender-historical implications of these names are discussed in Weber, 'Von Fürstinnen und Terzeln', pp. 42–4.

[14] On the subjectification of animals inspired by Foucault's concept of *subjectivation*, see Eitler, 'Animal History as Body History', pp. 262–5; on the concept and its use in the human sciences, see the overview offered by Stewart/Roy, 'Subjectification', who point to the double meaning of the concept that refers to both identity or self-knowledge and being 'subject to another by control and dependence'.

[15] 'Il sig[nifie] aussi, Le lieu où sont les oiseaux de proye, *Il est logé auprés de la fauconnerie du Roy*', the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* informed its readers in 1694 (vol. 1, art. 'Fauconnerie', on *Dictionnaires d'autrefois*). For the concept of 'animal spaces', see Philo/Wilbert, 'Animal spaces, beastly places', pp. 6–13.

[16] A notable exception is the Falcoaria do Paço real de Salvaterra de Magos in Portugal. Yet the eighteenth-century buildings were in such poor condition that the original substance was largely removed before the buildings were reconstructed. See http://www.monumentos.gov.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=7942 (last accessed 11 July 2024).

of Francis I, contemporary representations of the court on the move also included hooded falcons carried from place to place on cadges.[17]

At the turn of the seventeenth century, the Louvre in Paris and, under Louis XIII, the château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye became the main residences of a royal entourage that hardly left the Île-de-France, except for military expeditions. With this sedentarization of court life, the royal kennels, the stables, and the *basse cour* for chicken and other farm animals were still close to, yet increasingly separated from, the living quarters of the king and his court for sanitary reasons, among others.[18] In the Louvre, a *tour de la fauconnerie* existed but seems to have been used as a library already at this time, whilst at least a part of the royal birds were hosted and trained in the surroundings of the capital.[19] Apart from the aspect of court politics that will be discussed in Chapter 4, the creation of the king's cabinet falconry (*fauconnerie du Cabinet du roi*) in 1612 can therefore also be interpreted as a response to the growing social and spatial distance of the king's ordinary falconry staff—humans and animals—from the person of the king.

A passionate falconer with limited room for manoeuvre, the infant-king Louis XIII, wanted to interact daily with his birds whom he trained to chase sparrows and other small birds in the courtyard, the galleries, or even in the interior spaces of the Louvre.[20] There is no plan that indicates the precise location of the newly created cabinet falconry, but there is evidence that the *oiseaux du Cabinet du roi* lived close to the king's own living quarters. For instance, a contemporary author mocked the fact that 'a falconry close to his [i.e. Louis XIII's] cabinet distracted him from his studies'.[21] In his account of the king's falconry in 1615, Charles d'Arcussia reports that every morning after prayers and breakfast, the king

> goes up to the cabinet of the birds where there are white gyrfalcons and others, tiercels of white gyrfalcons and others, common lanners and lannerets [i.e. male lanner falcons], *alphanets* that are called lanners of Tunis, and Tunisian lannerets, sakers and sakerets, lanners from Russia and their lannerets, *antenaire* falcons, falcons moulted in the field and falcons moulted in captivity, Tartary

[17] See Schmidt, 'Falkenhaltung und das Problem der Mobilität', discussing also the well-known pen drawing by Antoine Caron, *La cour quittant le château d'Anet*, early sixteenth century (Musée du Louvre, RF 30624, RMN-Grand Palais).

[18] Chatenet, *La cour de France au XVIe siècle*, pp. 87–8; Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, pp. 59–63, 231–8. Until the mid-sixteenth century, the French royal court had been essentially 'nomadic'; see Solnon, *La cour de France*, pp. 51–73.

[19] In his diaries, the king's physician Jean Héroard repeatedly stated that the king went out '*à la volérie*' in places such as the plains of Grenelle, Vincennes, and Bourg-la-Reine, or 'visited his falconry in Bourg-la-Reine' (Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 2, 9 February 1619), which indicates that at least in some cases, the birds lived in buildings outside the court and capital.

[20] See Weber, 'Liminal Moments', pp. 45–7.

[21] Anonymous, 'Détails sur le caractère de Louis XIII', BnF, site Richelieu, Cinq cents de Colbert, 484, fol. 558–9, quote 558v. The anonymous document has survived in a collection of copies of letters to Catharina de' Medici and gives a very critical account of the king's character.

> falcons and their tiercels… *alettes*, merlins, goshawks and [their] tiercels, sparrowhawks and dunnocks, hobbies, kestrels, shrikes, little falcons, and generally all sorts of birds of prey.[22]

This sentence is remarkable, both for the birds' proximity to the king's own rooms and for the number of different bird species that d'Arcussia enumerates (even if the variation may be exaggerated). According to the same source, the king's cabinet falconry consisted of almost 140 raptors of different types at that time, all living in the Louvre. The inclusion of various exotic birds of prey indicates that in the beginning, the king's cabinet falconry was something between a collection of curious living birds and a hunting organization.

Under Louis XIV, however, the royal falconries followed the general trend of a spatial detachment of 'animal spaces' from the living quarters of the sovereign. While the new rooms for the raptors and falconers of the *Grande Fauconnerie* were located in the Grand Chenil, built by Mansart in the 1680s near the main residence at Versailles,[23] the cabinet falconry was moved paradoxically some thirty kilometres away from the living place of the sovereign. It found its definitive place on the grounds of the Château Brillant, belonging to the Forget family, in the village of Montainville.[24] Due to this relocation, the cabinet falconry was more removed from the social life of court (except for its head, who had a *hôtel* at Versailles), but at the same time also more professionally equipped. According to a late eighteenth-century description, there were 'different buildings occupied by the falcons and other birds and by the falconers; additionally, there are pigeonries, horse stables, and barns.'[25] The Montainville falcons spent their nights in separate chambers that were named after the quarry they were trained for: the 'chamber for crow', the 'chamber for magpie', and the 'chamber for the fields' were each equipped with special furniture, drinking vessels, tweezers, and other material required for the daily care of the royal raptors.[26]

[22] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la Fauconnerie du Roy', in *La Fauconnerie* (1644), pp. 164–5.

[23] According to the German traveller Christoph Pitzler, the falconry section of the house was easily recognizable from the outside by the stone falcon mounted above the portal. See Pfitzler, 'Reisebeschreibung' (1685–7), p. 120, and on the construction and spatial organization of the Grand Chenil, which housed the *vénerie* with its horses and hounds was located, Marie/Marie, *Mansart à Versailles*, vol. 1, pp. 189–94. The rooms of the former falconry are still marked on floor plans from the early nineteenth century; see Vial, 'Le grand chenil de Versailles', ill. 4.

[24] On the history of the village and the site of the falconry, see Tréton, *Histoire de Montainville*, pp. 251–70.

[25] 'Estimation du fief de Château-Brillant et d'autres Biens en Montainville appartenants aux trois enfants de feu M^{r} le marquis de Forget', dated 3 February 1783, BnF, site Arsenal, Ms 7877.

[26] See 'Inventaire de Messire Jean Claude Forget Capitaine de la fauconnerie du Cabinet du Roy fait par M.^{e} Deshayea notaire à Paris le 16. Juin 1755 et jours suivantes', BnF, site Arsenal, Ms 7874/75, fols. 109r and 111r ('Chambre pour Corneille', 'Chambre pour Pie', 'Chambre pour champs'). While it is not clear whether the birds lived in these rooms or in separate buildings, the rooms certainly were used by human members of the different *vols*.

In each chamber of the Montainville falconry, different species of raptors seem to have lived closely together. According to an early nineteenth-century manuscript description written by a member of the Forget family, the heron and kite parties were composed of gyrfalcons and peregrines; the crow party was made up of '*sor*' peregrines, tiercels of the gyrfalcon, and eagle owls; the *vol pour champs*, a hunting team that was specialized in the hunt on partridges and pheasants, looked after haggards and tiercels of the peregrine, male lanners, goshawks, and merlin; and the *vol pour rivière*, which hunted waterfowl and eventually fish, held peregrines and, at least occasionally, trained cormorants.[27]

There is evidence that this close cohabitation of various sorts of raptors in the royal cabinet falconry was not always free of conflict. According to the *lieutenant de chasse* Charles-Georges Leroy, who had probably corresponded with his colleague the Marquis de Forget before writing his articles on falconry for the *Encyclopédie*, especially the gyrfalcons from Norway tended to attack gyrfalcons from Iceland and other birds even of their own population, which is why they always had to be attached to their bars with strings.[28] During the day, however, the falcons spent most of their time outside in the fresh air, sitting peacefully on roofed perches (Figure 2.1). The garden of the Montainville falconry was equipped with pikes and other material used for 'learning to fly', and in the wider park of the Forget estate, the falcons could also chase their quarry. According to a description of the fief from 1783, the cabinet falconers trained so often with their horses and birds that larger game animals avoided the grounds.[29]

At the emperor's court, the falcons were held in a falconry in Laxenburg, about twenty kilometres from Vienna. Some years after its partial destruction during the Turkish siege in 1683, the ancient hunting lodge was restored and expanded, with additional buildings specifically designed for falconry purposes.[30] Falconers, birds, horses, and greyhounds were hosted in separate rooms, while the landscape around the castle offered perfect conditions for training and the practice of falconry, including a heronry where herons could breed, ponds and streams for waterfowl, and open lawn where the falconers and birds could chase their prey on horseback (Figure 2.2). Similar to the French cabinet falconry in Montainville, the emperor's raptors were distributed in specialized teams called parties (*Partheyen*) who trained their falcons for the flight on heron (*Raiger-Parthey*), kite (*Millan-Parthey*), crow and magpie (*Krää Parthey*), or hares and waterfowl of the 'district' (*Revier-Parthey*). Each party was managed by a falcon master (*Falken-Meister*) and had their own staff and rooms. In daily life, the ordinary

[27] [Armand Claude de Forget], 'Recherches sur la fauconnerie', *c.*1803–4, BnF, site Arsenal, Ms 7889, 'Etat des oiseaux de proie don't on fait usage pour les differents vols'.

[28] Charles-Georges Leroy, art. 'Fauconnerie', in *Encylopédie*, vol. 6, pp. 430–2, here p. 432.

[29] 'Estimation du fief de Château-Brillant' (above, note 25).

[30] See Leitner, *Monographie des Kaiserlichen Jagdschlosses Laxenburg*, pp. 9–10. On Laxenburg and its local society and hunting parks, see also Suttner, *Laxenburg*; Hajós, ed., *Der malerische Landschaftspark*; Weber, 'Rechnen mit der dritten Dimension'.

Figure 2.1 *The Grand Falconry of Versailles (2)*, oil on canvas, eighteenth century. The scene shows the French king's falconers fitting a falcon with a hood and leash, and possibly repairing a broken feather. The falcons on the cadge are ready to be taken out on a hunt or for training, while other falcons sit quietly on their poles in the open air and on perches on the ground. Despite its title, the painting probably shows the buildings of the falconry in Montainville

Source: Musée du Château de Versailles, inv. no. 7037/RMN–Grand Palais, photo by Christophe Fouin.

Figure 2.2 Map of the park and castle of Laxenburg by Johann Ernst Mansfeld, coloured engraving, 1783. The buildings housing the falcons and hounds can be seen on the map. Whole sections of the fenced park were devoted to the keeping of herons (*heronière*) and pheasants (*faisanderie*), while falconry was sometimes practised in the surrounding meadows, as shown in the separate hunting scene at lower right
Source: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, AB 247 KAR MAG.

falconers (*Falkner-Knecht*) and 'falconer boys' (*Falkner-Jung*) were responsible for feeding, training, and treating the falcons. Yet, in contrast to France, the park of Laxenburg was not only the training ground for the falconers and their birds, but also became the place where the emperors and empresses held their regular falconry parties in spring. Instead of the falcons and their prey, it was the human court that moved for the occasion of the hunt.

At other European courts, too, more remote and professionally equipped places to accommodate the precious birds and organize the hunts were constructed during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In Denmark, for instance, a *falkonergården* (falconer's garden) was established some kilometres west of the centre of Copenhagen in 1664 to permanently host twenty to thirty falcons as well as, temporarily, the falcons that would be sent on to the European courts.[31] In Germany, rulers like the elector of Cologne gave orders to construct

[31] See Wenzel, *Kunsten at jage met rovfugle*, p. 23; Christiansen, *De store falke fra de danske konger*, pp. 53–63. Some decades later, the falconry was integrated into the park of the newly created Frederik's Palace.

special hunting lodges such as the richly decorated castle of *Falkenlust* ('falcons' pleasure') in 1729–37.[32] In Portugal, a new royal falconry was created in Salvaterra de Magos as late as the 1750s in order to host the king's falcons—probably the last example of the general European trend to place the falconries some dozen kilometres outside the capitals.[33] These spatial and organizational rearrangements share some characteristics with the 'going out of court' of the growing state bureaucracies during the early modern period. This process enabled specialized government services to develop 'fixed routines and a stronger corporate identity'.[34] Yet in contrast to the new ministerial buildings, the falcon houses and other hunting services were situated in more rural settings, which contributed to a regular de-urbanization of court life during the hunting season.[35]

Beyond organizational, aesthetical, and even sanitary reasons that motivated the rulers to escape the cities during the warmer months of the year, there were also several animal-related reasons that prompted the removal from the residences of the princely falconries. A falconry situated too close to the residence city and away from the actual hunting grounds could cause severe problems for the service, as a report of the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel's master falconer Ludolph von Canstein shows. Enclosed by the city and crop fields, the falconry of Waldau scarcely offered enough space to train goshawks and sparrow hawks for the low flight on partridges in the fields. 'Concerning the exercise of Icelanders, gyrfalcons, and peregrine falcons', von Canstein explained, 'it is known that the area can never be big enough, as the training does not only require small game birds, but also hares, herons, kites, tits, crows, and similar animals, which must often be followed for several miles.' If their training space would be further restricted as requested by the neighbouring farmers, 'the natural exercise would be of poor quality and the birds would entirely degenerate'.[36] Conversely, this means that the health and the hunting performance of falcons kept in special falconry buildings outside the capitals increased thanks to better living and training conditions and due to the fact that they already perfectly knew the grounds when the sovereign visited the place to see his birds flying.

Finally, being close to the daily life of falconry training was not to every sovereign's taste. Because of the falconers' shouts to recall their birds, falconry was a relatively noisy affair, and watching the routinized and often unsuccessful attacks on physically handicapped kites or herons could be an unpleasant affair for the perfectly civilized courtier. Therefore, the sun king's falconer Charles de Morais recommended to practice training on kites and herons 'in the most distant places from court in order not to ruin the pleasure of the king'.[37] Thus, like in a theatre,

[32] Hansmann, *Schloss Falkenlust*.
[33] See Batista Leite, *Falcoaria Real*, esp. pp. 39–44.
[34] Duindam, 'Royal Courts', p. 442.
[35] See Weber, 'Liminal Moments', pp. 47–9, and, more generally, Quenet, *Versailles*.
[36] *Obristfalkenmeister* Ludolph von und zum Canstein to Landgrave Frederick II, Kassel, 29 August 1765, HStAM, 5, 12815 fol. 10–11r.
[37] Morais, *Le véritable Fauconnier* (1683), pp. 3–4.

the spectacle of courtly falconry functioned only when the public could not constantly observe how the play was rehearsed and how the different actors and material elements were rearranged behind the scenes. The creation of separate princely falconries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was therefore an answer to the specific needs of both the precious raptors from the North as well as of a Baroque court culture that showed less tolerance for coincidence and failure.

2.2 Diseases, Diets, and the Limits of Care

'In order to preserve the falcons and to keep them healthy, it is important that the falcon house, or falcon court, is well and healthily sited and well-constructed', wrote the Ansbach lawyer and town clerk Johann Salomon Schülin (1692–1758) in an unpublished falconry treatise commissioned by Margrave Carl Wilhelm Friedrich around 1735.[38] As a model for such a health-promoting falconry, Schülin described the *Falckenhoff* at the court of the elector of Saxony in Dresden, where the falcons lived in a 'fine large chamber', in which the floor was covered with fine sand 'so that the falcon excrements could be cleaned without any further stench'. In summer, they sat outside in the sun on blocks in the green lawn, in winter on high perches inside.

> The windows of this chamber are large, bright, and well made, and face the midday sun. Upstairs, the wild-caught or new birds are kept in dark chambers. Downstairs, in the small room, the falcon-boy cuts the raw meat into clear pieces for them to eat, which is necessary for their cure.[39]

Behind this idyllic description of the Dresden falconry were serious worries. The falcons' fragile health was a major concern at the court of the Margrave of Ansbach, who, as we have seen above, was particularly saddened when his Icelandic gyrfalcons died within a short time. At other princely courts, things did not look much better in everyday life. In fact, sick falcons caused a great deal of annoyance and motivated repeated architectural adaptations and relocations.

A particularly well-documented example of this is the Bavarian court. In 1678, Elector Ferdinand Maria had ordered that the falconry in Neudeck '*ob der Au*', which was located 2.5 kilometres south of the Munich residence, should be restored. Conforming to the new standards, the building was to receive a new roof and separate chambers 'for the field birds and crow birds, and for the owls and pigeons'.[40] After the reopening of the falconry, the new elector Maximilian II Emanuel purchased Nordic gyrfalcons that were to be hosted in this newly

[38] Schülin, *Von der Fauconerie* (*c*.1735), ed. Pfeifer, p. 79. [39] Ibid., p. 80.
[40] Proposal to the Elector, 16 May 1678; Seidenader, *Kulturgeschichte der Falknerei*, vol. 3, p. 1375.

equipped falconry.[41] Yet despite repeated efforts to improve the buildings, the location turned out to be a bad choice. In 1723, a report stated retrospectively that in the Au falconry, where 'many precious ice-falcons [i.e. Icelandic gyrfalcons] and other birds' stayed, 'the space and situation, the humidity and wetness, were very harmful to these birds'.[42] Instead of attacking herons from above before an amazed courtly public, many birds suffered from diseases and died shortly after their arrival. In order to end this unsatisfactory situation, the building in Neudeck was finally sold and the birds transferred to a new *Falkenhof* ('falcons' court') outside the city walls and—to avoid humidity—at a safe distance from the river.

What had happened to the elector's falcons? From a modern perspective, the poor health of the Neudeck falcons can most likely be attributed to respiratory problems. The widely ramified lung apparatus of gyrfalcons allows for increased air exchange and an accelerated metabolism, but also provides good conditions for microspores of the Aspergillus fungus group to germinate, especially in enclosed spaces.[43] Until the invention of antibiotics, captive falcons were therefore particularly susceptible to lung diseases, which were undoubtedly exacerbated by the humid, cool climate in the Bavarian court falconry. Early modern falconries, however, did not employ their own physicians—in fact, veterinary medicine did not develop until the late eighteenth century when the golden age of falconry was in decline. The information on falcon diseases in manuscript letters or other courtly documents therefore remains mostly vague and expresses a certain helplessness.

In contrast, contemporary falconry treatises contained detailed chapters on falcon diseases and treatment options. However, these followed the rules of an evolving humoral-pathological discourse rather than systematic observation and treatment.[44] According to Charles d'Arcussia, who combined practical knowledge with learned humanism in his *Fauconnerie*, the main diseases of falcons could be divided into four groups, corresponding to the different temperaments of the falcons. Following this view, the 'choleric' lanner falcons were thus most susceptible to a sort of 'rheumatism' that manifested itself in a swollen head and the 'melancholic' gyrfalcons to a digestive disease called '*la croye*'.[45]

While it is often difficult to identify these diseases, the proposed therapies to cure the birds seem even more adventurous from a modern perspective. To treat 'rheumatism', for instance, falcons should be 'purged' by the use of pills and a

[41] Ibid., p. 1379.
[42] 'Kauff- vnd respectie tauschbericht', dated 18 August 1723, ibid., pp. 1786–7.
[43] See Ciesielski, *Der Gerfalke*, p. 56.
[44] For an overview on premodern falcon medicine, see Von den Driesch, 'Falkenheilkunde'. On the concepts and practices of medical treatment of falcons in the medieval period, see esp. Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie au Moyen Âge*, pp. 173–260; Doyen-Higuet/Van den Abeele, eds, *Chevaux, chiens, faucons*.
[45] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 63. Both diseases are already documented in medieval falconry treatises; see Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie au Moyen Âge*, pp. 189–90, 193.

meal of meat combined with absinthe.[46] Other diseases were to be treated with pieces of a fox's brain, coral powder, ambergris, pieces of a mummy, and other rare substances that were also recommended in contemporary prescription books for human diseases. D'Arcussia proudly boasted that he restored the broken wing of a lanner falcon of the province's governor, Henri d'Angoulême, with a mixture of wine, rose petals, myrtle, and other ingredients he allowed to evaporate close to the wound. According to d'Arcussia, the recovered bird then lived and hunted for another four seasons.[47]

Otherwise, however, there are few references in contemporary sources to specific applications of the therapies that were handed down in the falconry treatises. Courtly practitioners such as the mid-eighteenth-century Ansbach falconer who recorded an instruction for his colleagues even showed their fundamental scepticism towards such elaborate therapies:

> If a falcon is sick, no medicine will help, though many have read books prescribing this or that for diseases. But it is all nothing, for a bird must help itself, and a good nature is best.[48]

According to the same source, the only help that the human caretaker could offer his sick bird was good food, especially the fresh meat of young pigeons and chicken that could be mixed with egg yolk. These animal-based dietary components, which were also given in everyday life, are richly documented in courtly sources. The six thousand pigeons and thousand eggs that were needed annually for the alimentation of the falcons in the French king's cabinet falconry in Montainville, according to Forget's list of 1783, give an impression of the insatiable appetite of the royal raptors and the concomitant costs. In the case of Laxenburg, 2,766 Reichsthaler and 10 Kreuzer were spent for the falcons' food ('*Assgeldt*') in 1746—more than ten times the annual salary of a falcon master.[49]

At minor princely courts like that of the duke of Wurttemberg, where all additional costs had to be approved by the *Rentkammer*, supplying the birds with fresh meat could therefore be a logistical and financial challenge. In April 1701, the local administrator of Herrenberg near Stuttgart warned the duke that if the court did not immediately organize the delivery of 'chicken meat and other appropriate food', the thirty falcons would suffer from hunger.[50] The court then ordered all holders of pigeonries around Stuttgart to deliver a certain number of pigeons every year or to pay the so-called '*Taubenschlaggeltter*', a sort of tax that

[46] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 64–5.
[47] Ibid., pp. 101–2.
[48] 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, p. 159.
[49] See 'Falcknereÿ-Rechnung von Ersten Jenner biß letzten Decembris 1746', OeStA/AVA, FA Harrach, WA 2382. That is 18.5 per cent of the total costs of 14,935 Rt. 15 Kr.
[50] The *Vogt* of Herrenberg, Jäger, to Duke Eberhard Ludwig of Wurttemberg, 18 April 1701, StAS, A248 Bü 386.

had first been introduced in 1656 to finance the regular supply of pigeons to the ducal falconry.[51] When Württemberg's falconry corps was reorganized in 1711, the new contract with the master falconer Wolfgang von Kaltenthal stipulated that all costs for the feeding of the birds, dogs, and horses of the falconry should be included in the overall budget of the falconry—a clause that caused supplementary costs for the contractor and seems to have contributed to the swift end of this project.[52]

Overall, there is no single solution to the problem of organizing falcon feeding, and decisions could depend on the ups and downs of court budgets and the ruler's power relations with his subjects. In Hesse-Kassel, an annual delivery of 365 chickens (288 from the county of Kassel and seventy-seven of the county of Homburg) and four hundred pairs of pigeons (244 from Kassel and 156 from Homburg) to the landgrave's falconry was stipulated in 1731, for which the purveyors received only a modest reimbursement of 98 Reichsthaler which caused repeated discussions.[53] In contrast, in the falconry of the kings of Portugal, built in 1752, a large pigeon loft was an integral part of the architecture in order to make the supply of fresh meat more reliable and predictable. In any case, the destinies of the two emblematic birds—doves and hawks—that lived under semi-free conditions in order to serve very different human needs were deeply intertwined.[54]

A particularly sensitive period for the falcons' health were the weeks of moulting. During this period, which usually falls in the summer, the birds change their plumage feather by feather. A sufficient supply of high-quality fresh meat was considered a crucial factor for this process to be completed quickly. At the Ansbach court, the peregrine falcons were placed in so-called 'moulting chambers' (*Mauserkammern*) after St John's Day (24 June), where six to eight birds per room could move freely and change their plumage.[55] In addition to regular cleaning, a fresh water supply, and ventilation, care had to be taken to ensure that the birds did not gain too much weight during their moult and thus become unfit for hunting.

[51] See the list in StAS, A248 Bü 387, dated 10 April 1710, listing the monetary payments or payments in kind of *circa* thirty parishes around Stuttgart for the years 1702–1709. On the *Taubenschlaggelder* and other unpopular duties to serve the princely hunts in the Württemberg context, see Knapp, *Neue Beiträge zur Rechts- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, p. 76.

[52] Contract (*Revers*) with *Oberfalckenmeister* Wolfgang von Kaltenthal, Stuttgart, St George's Day (23 April) 1711, StAS, A248 Bü 387, sect. 6–7. On falconry at the Württemberg court, see Wagner, *Das Jagdwesen in Württemberg*, pp. 373–5.

[53] HStAM, 40 a Rubr. 12, 114, 'Hühner- und Taubenlieferung zur Falknerei zu Waldau, 1731–41'.

[54] On the cultural history of the domestic pigeon, which was used for food and distance communication, see, e.g., Schneider, *Tauben*, here esp. pp. 59–70.

[55] 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, p. 161. On the organization of the moult (French *mue*) that varied for different species of raptors, see also d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1644), pp. 105–7; Harmont, *Le Miroir de la fauconnerie* (1634), pp. 18–19; Latham, *Falconry* (1633), pp. 7–8, 42–3.

Before the falconers then prepared the birds for the autumn season in October, they subjected them to a special cleaning procedure, the 'fumigation'. For each falcon, three pipes were filled with tobacco and lit. The smoke was then deliberately 'blown' towards the falcons, who were left in an enclosed space full of smoke for some time. The goal was to kill small 'vermin' that had accumulated in their plumage.[56] The birds were subjected to the same procedure in the spring when, after several months spent in semi-heated chambers, they were prepared for the spring hunt. While in winter the cold temperatures prevented the courtly hunters from going on longer hunting trips, moulting was the primary reason why there was hardly any hunting with falcons in summer, even though this was technically possible.[57] Keeping falcons in good health throughout the year was therefore a maintenance-intensive task that always included longer periods without hunting activities.

How dynamic not only the composition of the group of birds but also the individual hunting status of the falcons was in the course of the year is shown by a compilation of the birds of the imperial falconry made in April 1711. In order to recommend himself to the new sovereign of the Austrian monarchy, Charles VI, for a continuation of his office as head of the falconry, the *Obristfalkenmeister* Count Ferdinand Franz Xaver von der Wahl proposed to hold a falcon hunt in Laxenburg in the early summer.[58] Of the 133 birds available in the Laxenburg falconry (Figure 2.3), about half would be in moult, but sixty-six falcons would still be in a good position to fly. With an additional six lanner falcons and eight goshawks that could be bought at the market, nothing would therefore stand in the way of a '*Lustbeiz*', the count argued—provided the designated Holy Roman Emperor had returned from the battlefields by then.

However, also the numbers of falcons could vary significantly in the course of the year. In the 1780s and 1790s, there were still about one hundred ordinary falcons in the emperor's falconry in Laxenburg during the main hunting season in spring. Yet in early summer, their number was significantly reduced—to about thirty falcons—with sick or invaluable birds having been given away, released, or killed.[59] Even in autumn, when new falcons were acquired to be trained for the

[56] 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, pp. 160–1.

[57] Some falconry authors like Charles d'Arcussia argued that it was also possible to hunt with falcons in the moult; see d'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', in *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 6. Yet, generally birds in the moult were considered 'unusable' for the hunt—probably not only for technical, but also for aesthetical reasons.

[58] Count von der Wahl to Charles (VI) of Austria, Vienna, 20 April 1711, HHStA OMeA ÄZA 23, 1711, fols. 645–52.

[59] See the *Instruction* to the falconry corps, dated 2 June 1791, art. 16, HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 21, no. 10. The instructions indicate an average budget for thirty falcons caught by the courtly falconers in the countries governed by His Majesty for the heron party and forty for the crow and district party for the hunting season from September to June. To those seventy birds, the Nordic gyrfalcons have to be added, of which, in 1782, thirty-six were present in the falconry; see HHStA HA OJäA 857, Fasz. 13 (1783), no. 36. In summer, the number of falcons was reduced to only eight

Raptors and prey	Heron	Kite	Duck	Crow	Magpie	Hare	**Total**
Icelandic Gyrfalcons (*Eislender, und Tertz*)	-	3	-	-	-	2	5
'Red' gyrfalcons (*Rothe Geerstückh*)	14	6	-	3	-	1	24
'Nordic haggards' (*Nordische Hagerth*)	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Gyrfalcons in moult (*Mauser Geerstückh*)	2	6	-	1	-	-	9
'Red' peregrine falcons (*Rothe Schlecht-falckhen*)	24	-	12	10	14	-	60
Peregrine haggards (*Schlecht Hagerth*)	-	-	13	-	4	-	17
Peregrines in moult (*Mauser Schlecht Falcken*)	4	-	3	4	5	-	16
Total	44	17	28	18	23	3	**133**

Figure 2.3 Composition of the Emperor's falconry in Laxenburg in April 1711. According to the Austrian master falconer Count von der Wahl, who had compiled the list, a further six 'blue-footed' falcons—probably lanner falcons—trained on kites and crow, and eight goshawks (two females and six males) trained on pheasants and partridges, were to be prepared for the summer hunt. If we add these birds to the list, we have a total of 147 trained birds of prey

Solurce: By the author, based on HHStA OMeA ÄZA 23, 1711, fols. 645–52.

next season, supernumerary birds were given away. Thus, when the heron master informed the secretary in December 1792 that there were thirty-eight falcons in his party, he received the order from Vienna to exclude six 'unusable' ('*unbrauchbare*') falcons from the feeding list.[60] The composition of birds of prey in the imperial falconry was therefore in constant flux.

One may wonder why raptors that had been purchased for high prices were excluded from the falconry after the season or even within a few weeks. Yet given the fragile health of the sensitive birds and the high costs of food and care, especially during the summer months, this practice followed an economic logic. Given the living conditions in an early modern falconry, the question was whether a bird was healthy and precious enough to balance the risk of being fed for months without being capable of hunting again in the next season. In the case of

falcons for the heron, crow, and district parties, while the precious gyrfalcons in the kite party probably stayed in the falconry.

[60] *Falkenmeisteramt* to *Reigermeister* Paul Pomps, Vienna, 10 December 1792, HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 22, no. 27.

the rare Nordic gyrfalcons and other high performers that had evoked the prince's personal interest and whose fate was possibly even observed by the diplomats of their foreign donators, the answer might often have been positive. Yet, this was arguably much less the case for 'unusable' peregrine falcons or goshawks that were easier to replace. At times when not only smaller princely courts had to watch their budgets, but also leading courts such as the imperial court were committed to the new cameralistic imperatives of 'court economy', the possibility of saving costs outweighed the affection for less prized and ailing falcons.[61]

2.3 Lessons in Interspecies Sociality

Early modern falconries not only hosted falcons, but also a variety of other animal species that were used for feeding the birds, for their training, or for the hunt itself. A contemporary plan of the Waldau falconry at the court of Hesse-Kassel gives an impression of how closely raptors, hounds, horses, cattle, and poultry lived together (Figure 2.4). Despite their natural antagonism, since falcons feared their nocturnal attacks, eagle owls that were needed to attract kites during the hunt also lived close by or even in the same rooms (Figure 2.5). Moreover, game animals were also kept close to their future chasers. In the emperor's falconry in Laxenburg, captive kites were housed in special rooms under the supervision of the chief falconer of the kite party—overall, no less than sixty kites during the hunting season and thirty in the summer.[62] The well-being of these birds destined as prey mattered, too. In 1790, the chief of the kite party was particularly unhappy that the kites should now live in the attic of Laxenburg's court theatre, as the birds 'who are accustomed to total silence' might suffer from the noise of the artistic representations.[63]

Early modern falconries thus provided an artificial habitat for a wide variety of species from different regions—not unlike contemporary princely menageries. In these animal spaces, a variety of more or less exotic animals were publicly displayed, or kept to serve the royal tables.[64] However, the raison d'être of falcons differed from that of menagerie animals. The captive raptors had to learn to play their specific role of princely hunting assistants. Therefore, they had to undergo a human-guided transformation process that altered not only their behaviour in many respects. Paradoxically, this process finally enabled them to do what they would have done in their natural habitats: fly high above the ground and attack

[61] See below, Chapter 6.2; on the fates of individual falcons, Chapter 3.4.
[62] 'Instruction' (1791) (note 58), art. 17.
[63] Report of the *kaiserlich-königliche Hofbauamt*, 5 August 1790, HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 20 (1790), no. 36.
[64] In the seventeenth century, the term *ménagerie* could refer to both a place for the public presentation of (more or less) exotic animals or to a farmyard (*Ökonomiegebäude* in German) where different sorts of livestock were kept. See Paust, *Studien zur barocken Menagerie*, pp. 15–22.

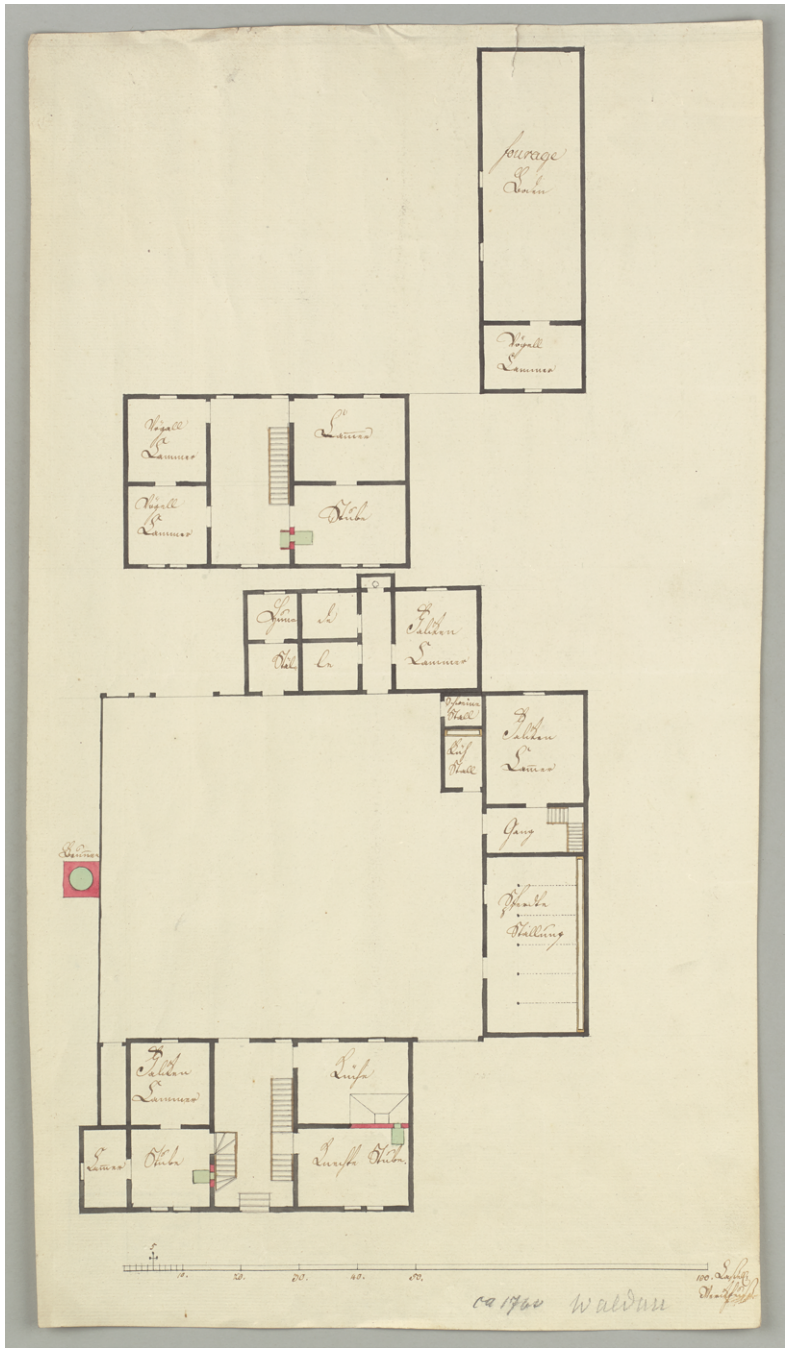

Figure 2.4 Plan of the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel's falconry in Waldau, *c.*1760. The ground plan shows where the three 'bird chambers' and three 'falcon chambers', four dog kennels, a horse stable, a cow stable, and a poultry stable were located. The other rooms were living quarters for the falconers, a kitchen, and a room for storing food and equipment for the animals. The falconry at Waldau, near Kassel, was built in 1598 and rebuilt and extended several times

Source: Hessisches Landesarchiv, Staatsarchiv Marburg, Best. Karten, no. P II 13289.

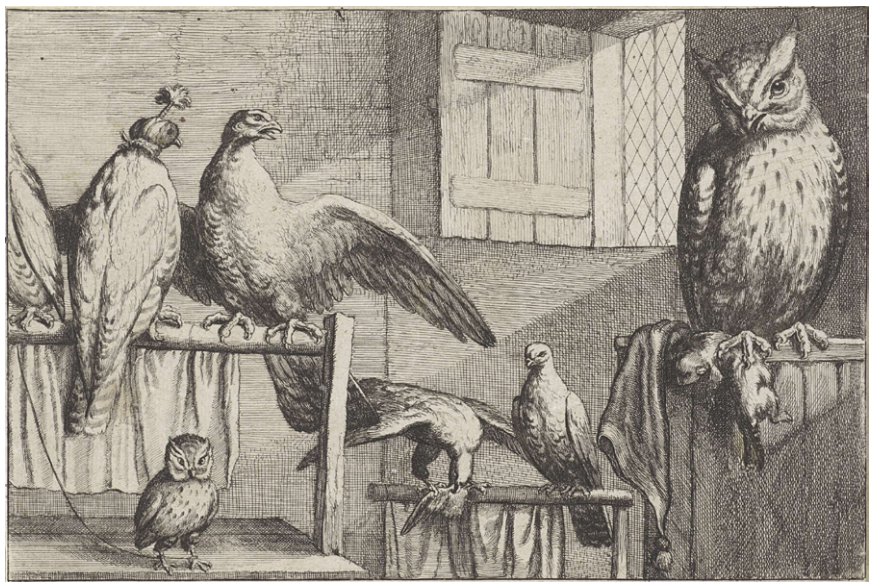

Figure 2.5 *Falcons and owls in a barn*, etching by Wenceslaus Hollar (after Francis Barlow), mid-seventeenth century. The picture gives an idea of the close cohabitation of different birds of prey—including owls used to attract kites during the hunt—in early modern falconries. The grids in the window and the ability of the birds to move freely without hoods follow the advice of contemporary falconry authors
Source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-11.625.

prey at great speed. For Charles d'Arcussia, the trained falcons were therefore not captive animals in the proper sense, as 'their food is always ready in the fields, as during their times of liberty when they were migratory birds; their wings are as good as they were before; they have the same cheerfulness and the same speed for chasing their prey.'[65] Thus, in a certain sense, the transformation brought the raptors closer to their natural behaviour—with the significant difference that they 'willingly' returned to their human masters, accepted to share their prey, and continued to live in the multispecies environment of the falconry.

Interspecies relationships of trust were the key for initializing such cooperation. The most basic, but not the only, relationship was that with human caretakers. The social adaptation of captive falcons to 'their' humans began already before they arrived at court and was primarily based on the interaction with their caretaker. In the case of the so-called eyeasses, the human catcher or falconer, to some extent fulfilled the role of the bird's parents, which could form the basis for a strong bond. Falcons are able to distinguish individual humans according to their voice, smell, appearance, or behaviour and accept them as a 'parental

[65] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 2.

partner'.[66] In cases when the same falconer was responsible for transport and training, as was the case with the so-called itinerant falconers, the bird's integration into the princely falconry was certainly facilitated thanks to their previous relationship with the caretaker. On the other side of the spectrum, a captive haggard that had changed hands several times probably showed aggressive behaviour towards humans well after the moment he had been caught, and was much harder to integrate into the new social environment. Yet, in both cases we can assume that usually at least some basic schemes of interspecies interaction—the habituation to human care, food, and protection—were already established when the falcon arrived in Laxenburg or elsewhere.

A first step of integration into the new spatial and social environment of the falconry was completed when the newly arrived bird accepted to sit calmly in a row with other birds of the falconry and accepted the pieces of meat that were offered to him or her. Certain objects facilitated the accommodation to this life in captivity. Like the rings attached to the legs, leather leashes helped to identify an individual bird, but their primary function was to attach the falcon to the perch or to the falconer's wrist. Cushions attached to the bars and movable perches allowed the birds to sit in the fresh air without injuring their claws. The bell attached to the legs of every courtly falcon was seen as a necessary feature for the hunt, but at the beginning the constant noise was rather a source of irritation to which the bird first had to become accustomed.[67] Finally, the use of the leather hood (Figure 2.6) that was put over the eyes of the birds not only calmed and enabled the handling of the sensitive birds after capture and during their journey. It remained the basic feature in the interaction between falconers and falcons, allowing the former to regulate the degree to which the birds participated actively in their environment, and to immobilize them if necessary.[68] Charles d'Arcussia assumed that the use of the leather hood and other objects in combination with close supervision by the falconer completely changed a bird's mind-set:

> After having equipped him [the falcon] with good laces, bells, and the leash, one has to stay with him; and through these means you make him lose his memory of all that he has experienced in the times when he was free.[69]

After the falcon had accepted his or her existence as a captive animal, the first steps in the process of 'manning' (*abtragen* or *abspinnen* in German, *assurer* or *affaiter* in French) could begin. Broadly understood, manning included all guided interactions between falconer and falcon from the first handling of the bird to the

[66] Brüll/Trommer, *Die Beizjagd*, pp. 41–2.
[67] See d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 27.
[68] On the disciplinary power of sight control in pre-modern falconry, see Bruttin, 'Wie die Disziplin in den Körper kam'.
[69] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 26.

Figure 2.6 Dutch falcon hood made of leather with a feather plum on the top, seventeenth century. Many German and other European courts ordered their falcon hoods in the Netherlands, where different types of hoods were made and sold for different species of birds. In the eighteenth century, courtly falcon hoods were often embroidered with velvet

Source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, NG-KOG-931-1.

point at which the bird could be flown freely.[70] According to early modern falconry authors, it was essential that the falcon first became accustomed to her or his falconer and then, in a second step, to the wider social environment. For this reason, the caretaking falconer should first spend day and night with the bird, speaking to her gently, taking her regularly on his fist, caressing her feathers from time to time, and feeding her again and again with carefully prepared fresh meat (Figure 2.7).[71] The goal of these repeated interactions was to establish a close relationship between bird and falconer on which future interactions could be based: 'The first point of falconry is to reassure your bird, as without assurance he cannot trust his master, and without trust he cannot perform nor please.'[72]

[70] Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*, p. 30.

[71] See d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 11–14; Latham, *Falconry* (1633), pp. 9–13; Morais, *Le véritable Fauconnier* (1683), pp. 18–20; 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, pp. 124–36.

[72] Harmont, *Le Miroir de fauconnerie* (1634), p. 12.

Figure 2.7 This eighteenth-century painting—the counterpart of Figure 2.1—shows two falconers preparing fresh meat to feed the falcons of the French king. On the table one can see a freshly killed pigeon being eviscerated and a larger piece of meat being cut into slices. The dogs are enjoying the meat scraps they have been given

Source: Musée du Château de Versailles, inv. no. 7036/RMN–Grand Palais, photo by Christophe Fouin.

Accustomed to the falconer's voice and smell and trusting his benevolence, the captive falcon was then ready for the first lessons, such as jumping freely on the falconer's fist following his visual or acoustic signals. According to Charles d'Arcussia, these lessons should take place in the interior of the falconry, and the falconer should always keep in mind the 'first principle of falconry, that is, hold

him well so that he won't escape.'[73] Thus, every action had to be prepared and conducted carefully, always considering possible misinterpretations by the animal. In his detailed step-by-step instructions on how to train captured haggard falcons, Symon Latham recommended his readers proceed as follows:

> Set her downe upon a pearch, about your breast high, or otherwise if it be a low pearch, then you must bee on your knees, because your *Haggard* will bee feare-full, and ready to start and bate from you, when shee shall see you so high over her at the first, until she be better acquainted with you. Then unstrike her Hood, and lure her using your voyce, with a bitte or two of meate bestowed on her as shee is hooded, so that will make her eager, and to love your voice, because shee sees nothing to crosse that humour in her.[74]

Authors like Latham and d'Arcussia presented the process of manning as a close falcon–falconer interaction, imagining the calm surroundings of a country gentlemen's house. Yet other authors rather insisted on the fact that the bird should be accustomed early on to the noisy presence of other humans and animals, after they had established a relationship of trust with their falconer. Edmund Bert advised his readers to take the falcon to 'some place where there is some great assembly' for the training, so that the bird loses its fear of all elements of a human-dominated environment:

> I would be neere some Market-Towne, where upon a Market-day I would find some convenient place, where Women with their Baskets, Horses with loads upon them, Carts with their carriage, variety of coloured Horses, and passingers-by in divers paces should come by her, there I would be sure to spend the whole day in playing with her in such manner upon the catch.[75]

In a courtly setting like the château de Fontainebleau, falcons could be placed in central spaces such as the *chambre ovale*, a room near the king's apartment where courtiers constantly hastened by, in order to facilitate their accommodation to the broader social environment.[76] In the emperor's hunting residence of Laxenburg, public places such as the entrance of the château served similar functions. Although the falconers protested when the court wanted to create new horse stables close to the *VöglKammer* ('birds chamber') of the heron party in 1776,[77] regular encounters with horses and dogs outside the falconry were part of the birds' training programme. At the court of Ansbach, falconers were even advised

[73] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 13–14.
[74] Latham, *Falconry*, p. 10.
[75] Bert, *Treatise of Hawks and Hawking* (1619), pp. 70–1.
[76] See Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, p. 63.
[77] Undated letter of heron master Rabel to Count of Saint Julien, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 6 (1776), no. 1.

to visit places 'where there are many people' in the evenings.[78] This might sound like a free pass to visit taverns—and there is in fact evidence that this was a common practice among courtly falconers.[79] A bird that was no longer frightened by laughing men and barking dogs would later also remain calm in the presence of dozens of conversing courtiers, running horses, and playing musicians when participating in a public courtly hunt.[80]

Yet, not in all cases, public houses proved to be a perfect learning environment for the sensitive birds. A late eighteenth-century instruction to the emperor's falconers in Laxenburg lamented that often

> birds were set on the side, or, instead of manning, [the falconers] were clowning around with each other, which spoiled the falcons and made them shy; [also] they could be easily harmed by an unexpected kick or blow caused by such childish behaviour.[81]

Therefore, the instruction continues, the falconers and their birds should spend the evenings together in the service rooms of the falconry—at least when their master did not explicitly allow them to take their birds with them to their own home or to a tavern. Notwithstanding, it was clear that falcons destined for princely hunts should be familiar with a dynamic social environment marked by various noises and smells and steady interactions among all sorts of living creatures. When this moment had come, the birds could be considered as 'half trained' ('*demy dressés*') according to a falconer of King Louis XIV.[82] Only after their integration into the animated social sphere in and around the princely falconry did it make sense to begin with more challenging lessons in the field.

2.4 Powerful Interests and Common Codes

How could one turn a captured bird of prey into a loyal hunting assistant? According to the falconry treatises, the main means to initiate and manage this transformation were regular rewards. In his treatise on hawking, Pierre de Gommer insisted that the falconer should treat his birds with 'benevolence' and 'rewards' for loving and obeying him.[83] At the same time, the falconer should

[78] 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, pp. 127–8.
[79] For visual evidence, see, e.g., the frontispiece of Schlegel/Verster von Wulverhorst, *Traité de fauconnerie*.
[80] According to d'Arcussia, goshawks were also called *cuisinier* because they were often held in the kitchens 'so that they would get used to the noise of humans and dogs'. D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 299.
[81] 'Instruction', dated 2 June 1791, art. 9, HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 21, no. 10.
[82] Morais, *Le véritable fauconnier* (1683), p. 20.
[83] Gommer/Gommer, *De l'autourserie* (1608), p. 26 (1877 edn, p. 31).

show patience and abstain from any form of punishment, as the birds would remember all the 'good' and the 'bad' they had experienced from their master. Pierre Harmont, in his *Miroir de Fauconnerie*, indicated the precise moments to give food (*curée*) to the birds during the training process, so that they would understand that it was good to fly on prey and then return.[84] Thus, the basic method of falcon training consisted in what later would be called 'positive reinforcement': for every cooperative behaviour, the bird receives a reward, which will increase its motivation to continue a certain behaviour and learn new things.[85] In other words, coercion should be replaced by cooperation, which seemed even more necessary since later, once in the sky, the falcon would have the possibility to escape.

The evolution of this training method was not the outcome of previous studies in bird ethology but rather of an accumulation of practical experiences in the interaction with captive raptors over hundreds of years. Nevertheless, it was also connected to more recent cultural trends such as the new concepts of 'good government' at the beginning of the Baroque age. This new vision of politics propagated a stricter hierarchical separation between the sovereign and his subjects on a symbolical level, but it also insisted on the need to consider the subjects' 'interests' on a more practical level of interaction.[86] This idea of rulership through interest management influenced the way animal training was conceptualized. Authors like the royal hunter Robert de Salnove were convinced that taking into account natural behaviour and offering food rewards was the best way to teach dogs to act as hunting assistants 'because the dogs hunt for their pleasure and their own interests'.[87] The same assumptions about the animals main motivation underlies the statements of Pierre de Gommer, Pierre Harmont, and other falconry authors who insisted on the importance of the *curée*: as soon as the falcons recognized that the food provided by the falconer required less effort, was supplied more regularly, and was even of better quality than that of the prey they could hunt in the wild, they would return to the falconer's fist for reasons of self-interest. At least on a semantic level, his view contrasted with medieval falconry treatises such as Emperor Frederick's *De arte venandi cum avibus* that insisted on the 'disciplining' force of food management, deprivation of sight, and repetition, if they considered the birds' modes of behaviour at all.[88]

[84] Harmont, *Le Miroir de la fauconnerie* (1634), p. 13.

[85] Today, this method is used in various fields of animal training, but it seems especially appropriate to raptors who show strong negative reactions to any form of direct punishment. See Fox, *Understanding the Bird of Prey*, p. 193.

[86] Holenstein, 'Introduction: Empowering Interactions', pp. 5–6; Weber, *Lokale Interessen und große Strategie*, pp. 63–5, 188, 590–1.

[87] Salnove, *La Vénerie Royale* (1665), p. 57. Regarding the training of horses, Antoine de Pluvinel's treatise *La Maneige Royal* (1623) is considered a breakthrough from coercive training methods, as presented by Federico Grisone, to a more cooperative mode: see Platte, *Die 'Maneige Royal'*, here esp. pp. 25, 48.

[88] See Bruttin, 'Wie die Disziplin in den Körper kam'; Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie au Moyen Âge*, pp. 124–36.

While meat was the incentive that motivated falcons to cooperate, the art of falconry was—and still is—primarily an art of communicating with birds of prey. As we have seen, the falconers regularly spoke to their falcons or touched them in order to build a relationship of trust. From a perspective inspired by semiotics and communication theory, such practises of interaction can be described as 'interspecific communication'.[89] Although early modern falconry treatises focused on what falconers should do, the interactions they described were that of interdependent partners. Thus, by calmly accepting the touch of the human hand, the falcon signalled a certain amount of acceptance and trust in the relationship that was the basis for further interactions. Later, the falcon would probably begin to beg for food when 'her' falconer entered the room, showing that she recognized him as a partner. Bird and falconer spun a web of mutual attention in which 'one cannot *not* communicate'.[90] Now, an acoustic, visual, or tactile signal of one partner could initiate more complex, multi-stage sequences of interaction among the members of different species 'that do not share a similar perception and codification of the world, except perhaps to a very basic degree (this normally being the very ground for establishing a—temporary or not—*common* code)'.[91]

During the first lessons that took place in the interior spaces of the falconry, the falconer removed the hood from the falcon's head, set the bird on a perch or on the fist of a colleague, called her so that she flew over to him from some metres of distance, and gave her food in case she did so. For reasons of security, the falcon was first attached to a long leash that could later be removed if she cooperated regularly. The behaviour of the 'other' now became expectable for both sides and could be regarded as meaningful—even if the cognitive representation of the same acts may have differed significantly in the minds of bird and human.[92] Thus, when early modern princely falconers took their falcon out to the fields to 'teach them to fly', they already shared some basic codes of communication with their falcons on which the subsequent lessons could be based.

One main challenge for the falconer was to find a way to communicate with the bird in the sky over a distance of dozens or even hundreds of metres. For this purpose, the use of two primary media of communication were discussed in detail in falconry treatises: the falconer's voice and the lure. Charles d'Arcussia considered a pleasant and simultaneously strong voice to be an essential physical precondition for falconers.[93] For Edmund Bert, it was the voice that most helped to create a bond between falconer and bird and enabled the former to govern the latter when she was in the air. Words directed to the falcon could therefore not be

[89] See Maran/Martinelli/Turovski, eds, *Readings in Zoosemiotics*; Håkansson/Westander, *Communication in Humans and Other Animals*; and the discussion in Weber, '"Ho loo, Ho loo, Ho loololoo!"'

[90] Watzlawick/Beavin Bavelas/Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication*, p. 30.

[91] Maran/Martinelli/Turovski, 'Readings in Zoosemiotics: Introduction', p. 2.

[92] See Wiedenmann, *Tiere, Moral und Gesellschaft*, p. 158.

[93] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 138.

repeated often enough, and especially during the training steps that provided more and more freedom—and thus possibilities to escape—to the bird:

> I never call her above eight or tenne yards, until I finde that shee is bolde enough and not faerefull, and that she be farre in love with my voyce, which I never faile to give her, even from the beginning of her feeding, until shee is flying, and that is lowde enough, as if I were to call her thirty or forty score, although I call her but ten yardes.…I spend two, three, and often foure times of the day thus in calling my Hawke, then for the day, for the most part my fist is her pearch.[94]

Some of the treatises gave advice to their readers on how to make use of their voice, which even included details on the syllables that, in the authors' view, were most suitable for communicating with the birds. According to Charles d'Arcussia, the falconer should recall the falcon by shouting '*yò, yò*' or '*vallaus, vallaus*', when he let the bird fly freely for the first time. Simultaneously, he should show her a piece of meat and caress her gently when she returned to his fist.[95] Then, the chain of signals and actions was gradually enlarged. When a game bird—or an artificial mock-up—was in sight, the falconer cried '*cluze, cluze*' as a command for chasing and attacking the prey.[96] The proposed shouts varied between treatises and languages. The English author George Turberville used the sequence '*Loe, birde, lo, Hey lo, hey lo*' to recall the bird,[97] and '*hillo, hillo, hillo, hillo!*' was the sequence used by the German-speaking author of the mid-eighteenth-century falconry instructions at the court of Ansbach.[98]

Although the falcon calls appear to be rather arbitrary, the practice seems to follow certain rules. The calls generally combined rather shrill tones with open vowels and were repeated several times. This might be interpreted as an adaptation to the falcons' auditory system and vocal behaviour, as the birds also communicate among themselves with sharp, serial cries that sound like '*keek-keek-keek*' or '*kyak-kyak-kyak*'.[99] Moreover, the phonetic transliteration of the falconers' shouts in early modern falconry treatises can also be seen as an attempt to standardize the vocal communication with the birds. When all falconers at a court like Ansbach used the same sounds to recall the princely birds, the practice of falconry became more independent from the individual caretaker who had established the codes in interactions with the bird.[100] Indeed, rather than through books, this standardization was ensured through practice in the

[94] Bert, *Treatise of Hawks and Hawking* (1619), pp. 20–1.
[95] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 17.
[96] Ibid., p. 20.
[97] Turberville, *The Booke of Falconrie* (1611), p. 122.
[98] 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, pp. 133, 144.
[99] Ferguson-Lees/Christie, eds, *Raptors of the World*, p. 905.
[100] The problem that falcons might have difficulties when interacting with another falconer than the one who had trained them was repeatedly evoked in falconry treatises. See, e.g., d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 172.

field where younger falconers trained their birds under the direct supervision of a falcon master. Like the uniformed falconers had to learn the ceremonial rules of the princely hunt including the proper commands, the birds had to learn to follow these standard calls.

Apart from the voice, the swinging lure served as the main medium of communication with high-flying falcons. Gyrfalcons, peregrine falcons, and lanner falcons were therefore also called *oiseaux de leurre*, 'lure birds.'[101] The lure was a bag-like object usually made of leather that was often decorated with feathers and attached to a string measuring between an arm's length up to several meters (Figure 2.8).[102] It played a key role in both flight training and hunting practice

Figure 2.8 Falconer's lure, made of deerskin, brass, silk, and hemp yarn, combined with pigeon plums, Austria, eighteenth century

Source: Jagdmuseum und Landwirtschaftsmuseum, Schloss Stainz, Sammlung Jagdkunde, Jk 4926.

[101] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694), art. 'leurre'. The term was less common in English, but in the Lexicon Tetraglotton by James Howell, which was published in London in 1660, 'Ucelli da lodro' and 'oyseaux de leurre' were translated as 'Birds of the Lure'.

[102] A detailed description of the material composition of the lure and other falconry tools can be found in the *Recueil des planches, sur les sciences, les arts libéraux*, vol. 2/2 (1763), art. 'Chasses', planche IX, p. 24.

with raptors. Swung through the air or trailing along the ground attached to a horse, the lure was to remind the raptor of a flying bird or fleeing hare on which they were trained to fly. While the first lessons of the chase consisted in playful attacks on the lure, immediately followed by the usual rewards, the same object would later allow to guide or recall the bird even when she was beyond vocal range.[103] In practice, the training and hunt with falcons always consisted in a combination of lure, voice, and meat (placed in the falconer's bag) that enabled the falconers to communicate with their birds in the sky and to lure them back to the ground.

Sending out and calling back formerly wild animals was one thing, motivating falcons to attack game animals that were much larger than themselves was another challenge. Under natural conditions, falcons would occasionally attack herons, cranes, or red kites to drive them out of their territory, but never engage in mortal combat with these powerful creatures. Whereas the basic lessons were the same for all captive raptors, their training on specific quarry needed special efforts and was therefore also discussed in separate chapters in the falconry treatises.[104] The lure was first equipped with the prey's feathers or fur in order to condition the young raptors to their chase. In order to practise the hunt of hares, a furry lure—enriched with some pieces of fresh chicken meat—was attached to a long leash that was held by a falconer riding on horseback or tied to a horse's tail.[105] Falconers also used dead pigeons decorated with black feathers to teach the birds how to hunt crows so that they would lose their fear and associate the capture of the chosen game with the food they liked.

A next step were attacks on living prey that was handicapped by cutting part of their feathers, 'sealing' their eyes, and binding them to long poles that were erected on open fields.[106] Practising on such training herons (called *Vorlaßreiher* in German sources), which stands in sharp contrast to modern animal protection rights and hunting ethics, was meant to reduce the risk that the precious birds would get hurt, increase their chances for success, and motivate them to go further. It here becomes clear that training falcons was not only considered an art that made use of the raptors' inherent abilities for the benefit of humans; the training was also supposed to transform them into royal combatants that behaved differently than their wild relatives. More obedient towards humans, but also more audacious and aggressive towards their predefined living animal targets—this

[103] On the highly developed visual system of falcons, see Ciesielski, e.g., *Der Gerfalke*, pp. 72–3.

[104] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 223–8; Harmont, *Le Miroir de fauconnerie* (1634), pp. 12–15; Morais, *Le véritable Fauconnier* (1683), pp. 34–69.

[105] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 223–4.

[106] Harmont, *Le Miroir de la fauconnerie* (1634), pp. 13–14. For the hunt on 'sealed' pigeons, which was also performed by young Louis XIII as a sort of game, see d'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la Fauconnerie du Roy' in *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 171. *Reiherstangen* are represented in some eighteenth-century German park plans or hunting paintings; see Kuth, 'Gedanken eines heutigen Falkners', p. 22.

was the behaviour that the falcons were to show when performing spectacular hunts for a courtly public.

Especially for the most spectacular hunts on cranes, herons, or red kites, the falcons also had to learn to work in teams. In addition to the combination of the usual training tools, another method of learning came into play: imitation. According to Harmont, the best method to initiate young birds to the hunt on magpies was to choose 'the wisest tiercel for hunting on the same prey and acting as a guide'. One should then first 'throw your guide, and when he has made four or five tours, throw the others…and make them fly and catch in the same way, giving them *curée* (hallow) three or four times'.[107] For the hunt on larger game, they also learned to play their role within the team in this manner. Like young dogs that were initiated into the *chasse à courre* by being tied to experienced pack hounds,[108] recently integrated raptors learned to attack red kites together with colleagues who were already used to bringing down herons or red kites from the sky. According to Charles d'Arcussia, 'for training the birds on kite, the shortest way is to do this in company of other trained birds who will show them the track; and not only for this sort of flight, but for all others, it is the easiest and surest means that we have.'[109]

When the whole team consisted of unexperienced birds, the training was a greater challenge for the falconer. In this case, d'Arcussia advised his readers to train his falcons—that should already be well accustomed to each other—by using a 'sealed' kite and tie a living young chicken to its claws.[110] In such a setting, the unexperienced birds would be motivated to attack the bird and even 'be pleased' when obtaining the meat. After this, the falconer and his birds should continue with a sealed kite without the chicken and a reward provided by the falconer instead, before training on a kite with full sight but cropped beak and claws so that the falcons would not be harmed. Only after several hunts of this type, the birds would be skilled and bold enough to begin with real-life hunts: 'After having continued this practice some days, you can give them a kite for true war. And when they bring him down, you can feed them with chicken, as the meat of the kite is very disgusting and bad.'[111]

For many courtly raptors, learning to perform in teams not only meant cooperating with their falconer and other falconers but also with members of other species. Especially for the hunt on crows and magpies that were difficult to hunt because they tended to hide in trees, the trained falcons were 'thrown' on their prey from horseback at full gallop in order to start with enough speed. Moreover, the falconers swung their lure from horseback to guide and recall their birds when a chase went on over several miles. Falconers therefore also had to be good

[107] Harmont, *Le Miroir de fauconnerie* (1634), p. 14.
[108] Salnove, *La Vénerie Royale* (1665), pp. 40–1.
[109] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 224.
[110] Ibid., pp. 224–5.
[111] Ibid., p. 225.

horsemen and their horses had to be especially trained, whereas the falcons had to be 'accustomed' step by step 'to be lured on horseback, in order to take them on the fist again without setting foot on the ground—which they will do very well if they are trained to do it'.[112]

With the third sort of animals of the classic courtly 'hunting trinity', hounds, the process of mutual familiarization began in the first days of the manning process when the raptors were to lose their natural fear through regular encounters, as outlined above.[113] Dogs were not only essential to detect and flush game on river banks and in the bushes but also to assist the falcons in battles on the ground and to bring the prey to the falconers. 'Therefore, the dogs must be inseparable from the birds', stated d'Arcussia.[114] In specific training lessons, setters and greyhounds were prepared for the distinct tasks of the search ('*queste*') and handing over ('*remise*') of different sorts of game animals.[115] In the second case, which was especially challenging, the dogs had to learn to take over herons, kites, or bustards that were still fighting for their lives without hurting the falcons who had brought them down to earth. According to d'Arcussia, this was only possible thanks to the superior intelligence and understanding of dogs which distinguished them from other animals, including falcons.[116] When a trained falcon was 'seconded by other birds, backed by the greyhounds, and assisted by the artifice of man, which serves him more than all the rest', the raptor was finally able to bring down and control the most powerful wild beasts as part of a carefully rehearsed interspecies team play.[117]

Thus, the captive birds brought to the courts from different regions finally turned into trained hunting assistants who followed the courtly falconers' calls and performed complex and dangerous hunts in teams with other animals—activities that went far beyond their range of 'natural' behaviour. According to the authors of early modern falconry treatises, such a spectacular transformation could take place within a period of five or six weeks, although the training flights had to be repeated regularly after reaching this stage.[118] In their view, this was the outcome of the remarkable skills of falconers whose profession they praised. Yet when reading their training advice closely, it also becomes clear that at each moment of this process, the cooperation of the bird was necessary.

The extensive training did not always lead to successful interspecies cooperation. Whereas the falconry treatises tend to tell success stories of completed transformations, the administrative sources of the courtly falconries suggest that a large part of the captive falcons never reached that level because of bad health

[112] Ibid., p. 42.
[113] On the 'hunting trinity', see Farinelli, 'A Beastly Court'.
[114] D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 34.
[115] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 204–10.
[116] D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), pp. 34–7, esp. p. 35.
[117] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 228.
[118] See 'Ansbacher Beizbüchlein', ed. Lindner, p. 149.

or 'uselessness'. This sooner or later led to their being removed from the limited feeding lists. Thus, the birds of prey that finally performed in front of the courtly public were selected individuals who had adapted successfully to the new living conditions and had proven their cooperative behaviour. However, human control was still far from complete. As we will see in the next chapter, the course of public princely hunts did not always follow human scripts.

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3
Battles in the Sky

On 7 May 1714, a fatal drama took place in the park of the Prussian king's residence in Potsdam. According to a newsletter report, Frederick William's best falcon had 'bravely' attacked a heron from above as she usually did.[1] Yet the heron reacted promptly, turned its head and bored its long, sharp beak into the falcon. At the same moment, the falcon, too, had hit her prey, 'so that both of them fell down to earth, dead'. Seeing this happen, the king ordered his servants to dig a tomb for his fallen falcon. Then the king's master of the hunt, Baron von Hertenfeld, carried the bird's corpse to the tomb, followed by King Frederick William I, the Margrave Albrecht Friedrich of Brandenburg-Schwedt, and the other participants of the royal hunt '*en procession*'. After the burial ritual, the king ordered a tombstone to be erected, on which an inscription should recall the brave raptor's life and death. The epitaph made up of five four-line stanzas was then printed and distributed by the royal court's printing office. Its first stanza reads as follows:

> I searched for my enemy, and soared up in the air,
> I found him and struck him, yet he beat me to it,
> The clever rogue, he knew how to hit me,
> So that I fell to earth together with him.

In the poem, the dead falcon turns her sad fate into a victory, saying that the king himself 'praises my courage, and decorates my corpse'. Addressing young male readers, the dead falcon concludes that whoever has some heroic blood running in their veins should be happy to risk their life for such a great lord.

It is difficult so say how much of this story is true. Although funerals and epitaphs for favourite animals were not an uncommon practice at early modern courts,[2] no carved tombstone for a falcon has survived in the park in Potsdam. It is, however, certain that the Prussian 'soldier king' and the witnesses of the scene were not the only ones who saw analogies between the falcons' chase and armed fights between humans. For early modern princes and noblemen of whom many had had a military education, hunting represented a training for war both on a physical and strategic level.[3] Accordingly, the actions of the animals involved

[1] [Franz Hermann Ortgies], Report from Berlin, 26 May 1714, in Friedlaender, ed., *Berliner geschriebene Zeitungen*, pp. 128–32, the following quotes pp. 131–2.
[2] See Jonietz, 'Animal Deaths', on tombs for falcons, esp. pp. 370–2.
[3] See Salvadori, *La chasse*, pp. 136, 163–70.

were perceived through a military lens, too. Falcon hunts were considered aerial battles long before the invention of balloons and airplanes. That hunting birds allowed princes to stage fights in the otherwise unconquered air space made them a powerful symbol of princely sovereignty and the hunts fascinating events for the courtly spectators. Like courtly theatre plays, the encounters followed predefined 'scenic' scripts that could end like a comedy—failure of the attack or release of the game after the chase—or like a tragedy (i.e. death of one or several animals). Yet, in contrast to purely artistic representations, the consequences for the animal 'actors' involved were real and often fatal.[4]

This chapter will present first the hunting parks as stages of these aerial battles and analyse the practices of game management that produced the opponents of the trained falcons. It will then focus on the variety of falcon hunts, their organization, and their symbolic meanings. Considering the different roles the trained raptors and other animals performed high up in the sky, it will finally tackle the question of animal agency. It will show that not all falcons followed the heroic model of the Prussian king's falcon who died in the service of her sovereign. Instead, some also seized the chance to leave the courtly stage altogether.

3.1 Hunting Parks and Falconry Seasons

Princely hunting was an activity that transformed early modern landscapes.[5] Huge forests were created in which no one except the sovereign and his servants were allowed to kill animals or remove wood, so that sufficient numbers of game animals would be present when the sovereign and his court passed by. In the large enclosed parks around the royal residences, special tracks, banks, and ponds were built in order to provide perfect conditions for spectacular and successful hunts. Compared to coursing, where a radiating road system and much space were needed, and ring hunts, where masses of animals had to be available at a given moment to perform the bloody spectacle, falconry was a less invasive hunting technique. Nevertheless, the hunt with trained raptors also required appropriate environmental conditions. While a court that was on the move could adapt to different conditions by choosing different sorts of raptors for hunting in different landscapes, the sedentarization of court life during the early modern period facilitated the creation of specific falconry grounds and the rise of the 'high flight'.

[4] According to Andreas Kotte, 'scenic sequences' are 'specifically emphasized and reduced in consequence', that is, they combine forms of display and play. However, there are no strict lines between scenic and non-scenic or theatrical phenomena in social life but rather different degrees of theatricality. See Kotte, *Studying Theatre*, quote p. 5; Kotte, 'Play Is the Pleasure'.

[5] For an overview, see Fletcher, 'The Impact of Hunting'.

Since the Middle Ages, the distinction between birds used for the 'high flight' (*haut vol*) and birds used for the 'low flight' (*bas vol*) was a basic distinction in falconry literature.[6] For the low flight, the raptor starts from the fist of the falconer or the branch of a tree and chases the prey—hares and different sorts of game like pheasants or partridges—near the ground. In the high flight, the falcon attacks the game from above in full stoop, usually after having already circled high up in the sky before the prey was flushed from the grounds ('waiting-on flight') or chasing the prey into the sky and attacking it in pairs ('ringing flight').[7] The two hunting methods roughly correspond to the natural hunting styles of short-winged hawks (*Accipitridae*) and long-winged falcons (*Falconidae*). Accordingly, specific treatises on hawking, the *autourserie* (derived from French *autour*, for goshawk) were written, and the more common *autoursier* was distinguished from the nobler *fauconnier*.[8] The English term 'hawking' is also originally derived from this species connection, even though it could also be used as a general term for all falconry techniques; here, the 'hawker' or 'austringer' was separated from the 'falconer'. Yet, the low flight technique can also be practised with other raptors like eagles or buzzard-like hawks,[9] whereas the high flight mode was and is limited to true falcons.

The general decrease of woods and the creation of gardens and parks near specialized hunting residences facilitated the rise of falcons in early modern court life. Whereas falconry had already been regarded as more royal in the times of Emperor Frederick II, hawking seems to have been the more common mode of hunting with birds of prey up to Emperor Maximilian I's reign (1486/1509–1519).[10] Yet from the late sixteenth century onwards, falcons were preferred to hawks and were even used for hunting near or on the ground. Especially the powerful Nordic gyrfalcons (*Falco rusticolus*) could be trained for both hunting methods as long as the landscape was open and not covered with trees and bushes, like in the surrounding meadows of Laxenburg castle near Vienna. Accordingly, we find gyrfalcons and peregrine falcons not only in the parties on heron, kite, and crow but also in the grounds and river flights of the courtly falconries in France and Austria.[11] In both regions, the rise of falconry was not only a response to changing

[6] Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie en Moyen Âge*, p. 47, and ch. 2, pp. 45–91, *passim*. For the following, see also Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks*, pp. 10–35; Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*, pp. 19–52.

[7] Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*, pp. 36–8.

[8] Gommer/Gommer, *De l'autourserie* (1594).

[9] The hunt with eagles that has always been practised in Central Asia, or with Harris' hawks (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) from the Americas, has only recently become more widespread in Europe, yet the authors of early modern falconry treatises were well aware that such birds could also be trained for hunts; see, e.g., d'Arcussia, 'La conference des fauconniers', in *La Fauconnerie* (1644), pp. 74, 138.

[10] See Lindner, *Die deutsche Habichtslehre*.

[11] On the use of different birds of prey in the different flights at the French royal court, see, e.g., 'Recherche sur la fauconnerie' by Monsieur Van, sent to the archivist Forget, 16 December 1804, BnF site Arsenal 7889, stating that haggard peregrine falcons were used for flights on pheasants and partridges. On a painting that shows a hunt on hares near Laxenburg, we see that white gyrfalcons were also used for this type of hunt, when it was practised in open fields: Johann Christian Brand, series *Die Reiherbeize von Laxenburg* (Museum Belvedere, Vienna, Inv. Nr. 2575).

environmental conditions but also a driving factor in the creation and recreation of especially designed landscapes.

In France, the first Bourbon kings and their entourage usually practised falconry at different sites around Paris and in the royal parks. In the early seventeenth century, the king's physician and educator, Jean Héroard (1561–1628), noted several places where young Louis XIII practised falconry. Over the fields near Le Bourget in the north-west outside the city walls of Paris, the king's falcons chased herons; in the plains of Grenelle, on the southern bank of the Seine, they were set on kites and crows; in the woods of Vincennes, they chased waterfowl swimming in a pond.[12] Furthermore, Héroard mentioned expeditions to Bourg-la-Reine and Antony in the south, along with trips to the foot of the Montmartre and frequent chases of pigeons or sparrows with merlin and sparrow hawks in the courtyard of the Louvre or the gardens of the Tuileries.[13] Later, the area of Saint-Cloud and the plain of Saint-Denis, where a small pavilion was built for the queen and her ladies to watch the hunts, became the preferred sites for the practice of royal falconry.[14] In the 1620s, the king now even flew his birds on the road during military campaigns and travels.[15] These different spots make clear that falconry was in principle a very flexible type of hunting that did not require large grounds because the open sky was the main scene of action for the trained birds.

In the further course of the seventeenth century, however, the practice of falconry became more strictly limited to the enclosed grounds near the royal residences. One reason for this spatial concentration was to avoid those curious observers who came too close to the king, a problem which Louis XIII repeatedly encountered during his more spontaneous hunting trips.[16] Other reasons were of a more organizational nature. The grounds had to be readily accessible for the servants who brought the game animals, for the members of court who assisted in the hunts, and for the workers who tended to the plants so as to maintain the open space required for the high flight. Under Louis XIV, fields on the Seine banks near the château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye—the main royal residence from the 1660s until 1682—became a preferred ground for practising falconry, followed by flat terrain in the plain of Saint-Denis and in parts of the immense park of Versailles in the later years.[17] Under Louis XV and Louis XVI, the hunts of

[12] See Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 2, for Bourget, for instance, the entries of 16 and 25 January 1611; for the plains of Grenelle, 23 December 1611, 13 January 1614, and 3 January 1615; for Vincennes, 22 February 1611 and 29 January 1612.

[13] Ibid., entries dated 3 January 1615 (Bourg-la-Reine), 2 April 1614 (Antony), 16 March 1613 and 17 March 1622 (Montmartre). For more details on Louis' hunts in and around Paris, see also Weber, 'Liminal Moments', esp. pp. 45–7.

[14] See Magaud d'Aubusson, *La fauconnerie*, pp. 60–1.

[15] See, e.g., Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 2, entries dated 17 February 1620 (near Juilly), 5 January 1621 (Amiens), 13 January 1622 (Poitiers), 22 December 1622 (near Tolon).

[16] See, e.g., ibid., p. 2259, 3 January 1615.

[17] In his diaries, the marquis de Dangeau repeatedly stated that the king 'went flying' (*alla voler*) in the park of Versailles. See, e.g., Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. 1, pp. 7 (April 1684), 122 (February 1685),

the cabinet falconry's birds 'ordinarily took place in the park of Versailles or in the plains of Choisy in the month of March or at the beginning of April.'[18] For such occasions, the trained birds were previously transported from the cabinet's falconry in Montainville to the grounds were the courtly falcon hunt was to take place.

At the court of the Austrian Habsburgs, a similar spatial concentration of the hunting activities took place between the early seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The personal diaries (*Schreibkalender*) of the Holy Roman Emperors from Ferdinand II (r. 1619–37) to Charles VI (r. 1711–40) that have been preserved in the Vienna archives give us detailed insights about the frequency and locations of their falconry activities.[19] During the seventeenth century, the rulers occasionally left their main residence, the Hofburg in Vienna, to fly their falcons on ducks, crows, or magpies in the nearby floodplain of the Danube. The Prater, a hunting area on the south bank of the Danube three kilometres from the Hofburg, was a preferred spot for these spontaneous hunting expeditions that brought some diversion during the dark winter months.[20] During travels through Austria and Germany, the emperors also practised falconry, but rather on local invitation than in an organized manner.[21]

In the eighteenth century, however, imperial hunting with falcons was almost exclusively practised in one place: Laxenburg.[22] Although Ferdinand II and Ferdinand III (r. 1637–57) occasionally went to their old hunting residence to fly their birds, the emperor's regular spring falconry stays (*Frühlingsbaiz*) in this place only became a fixed institution in the court's calendar under Leopold I (r. 1657/8–1705). Under his son and second heir, Charles VI, the importance of falconry at the emperor's court increased and was now almost completely concentrated in Laxenburg. The inner court stayed there for several weeks in April and May every year and sometimes came back for additional *Sommer-* or *Herbstbaiz* later in the season.[23] This practice of regular falcon hunts in Laxenburg,

132–5, 142–7, 153 (March and April 1685), 282–5 (January 1686). In the 1690s, Louis often started his falconry trips from his château de Marly, which was connected to the park of the same name.

[18] 'Recherches sur la fauconnerie', *c.*1803–4, BnF, site Arsenal, Ms 7889, fol. 1v.

[19] See HHStA HausA, Familienakten, 88–95, and Sammelbände, 2 (Charles VI).

[20] On 29 January 1703, for instance, Leopold I noted that he had flown his birds (*gebeizt*) and shot some hares in the Prater; see *Schreibkalender* of Leopold I, 1703, entry 29 January 1703, HHStA HausA, Familienakten, 95–9. On the emperors' hunts and hunting practices in and around Vienna, see also Winkler, 'Zur Kulturgeschichte der Jagd'; Kassal-Mikula/Krasa, 'Wien als Jagdresidenz', esp. pp. 116–23.

[21] For instance, during his travels to Prague where he was crowned king of Bohemia, Leopold I noted falcon hunts on quails, craws, and hares in his diary, at several places where he was hosted; see *Schreibkalender* of Leopold I, 1656, entries from 19 August and 25 August 1656, HHStA HausA, Familienakten, 91–3.

[22] Springer, 'Laxenburg als habsburgische Jagdresidenz'.

[23] Mitis, *Jagd und Schützen am Hof Karls VI.*, pp. 37–40; Seitschek, *Die Tagebücher Kaiser Karls VI*, pp. 314–19. In 1782 and 1784, for instance, summer hunts were held in Laxenburg; in 1789 and again in 1790, at the occasion of the visit of the king of Naples, the courtly falcons hunted in autumn. See HHStA HA, OJäA 858, Fasz. 13, no. 3; Fasz. 14, no. 10; Fasz. 19, no. 19, and Fasz. 20, no. 40.

combined with entertaining theatre plays and *Pirutschaden* (promenades with small carriages), continued under Empress Maria Theresa and her sons Joseph II and Leopold II until the 1790s.[24]

Like in the French case, this spatial concentration of falconry activities at the imperial court went hand in hand with a general ceremonialization of court life that also influenced the life of birds and hunting practices.[25] In the second half of the seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, the falcon hunts were kept away from the capital and its population and transferred to hunting scenes that were more carefully arranged to guarantee a pleasant and successful experience. Laxenburg provided all that was necessary to perform spectacular aerial fights. The trained falcons knew the grounds because they were trained there. A great number and variety of proper game animals like herons, kites, and pheasants were within reach. Open meadows enabled the hunters to chase prey near the grounds and offered beautiful views of the ancient castle, hills, and rivers that crossed the country. Finally, yet importantly, small pavilions (*Lusthäuser*) constructed at different sight spots in the park accommodated the ruler and the courtly public to watch the aerial combats.[26]

One of the spectators who watched such a falcon hunt in Laxenburg was the French nobleman and author of the widely discussed *Lettres persanes* (first published anonymously), Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de la Bède et de Montesquieu (1689–1755). On 20 May 1728, he noted in his travel diary that he had had the honour of dining at Emperor Charles VI's table in the castle of Laxenburg. After dinner, he followed the court to a small tower located in a meadow a quarter mile from Laxenburg. Montesquieu, who compared the rather modest equipment of the emperor's court with the splendid court of his native country, noted laconically that this building 'looked like a dovecote'. There, 'the empress and her ladies stayed upstairs, the emperor and his entourage downstairs. We played cards on both floors until some heron appeared.'[27]

Although the French traveller was apparently not overly impressed, it becomes clear that the falcon hunts took place in a carefully arranged landscape whose aesthetical principles were further emphasized in paintings. The large format series *Heron Hunt in Laxenburg* by the landscapist Johann Christian Brand (1722–1795), which was executed in 1758–9 for Empress Maria Theresa, gives a detailed impression of the constellation of landscape, animals, and courtly public

[24] Schneider, 'Der Alltag der Séjours'.

[25] On this trend that is mirrored in an increase of detailed court regulations, see Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, pp. 131–80; Hengerer, *Kaiserhof und Adel*, pp. 80–152; Pangerl/Scheutz/Winkelbauer, eds, *Der Wiener Hof*.

[26] On Laxenburg's landscape topography, see Hajós, ed., *Der malerische Landschaftspark*.

[27] Montesquieu, 'Voyage en Autriche', *Voyages*, vol. 1, p. 3. On the role of such noble visits for the image of the courts in the wider European courtly public, see Völkel, *Schlossbesichtigungen in der Frühen Neuzeit*.

Figure 3.1 Johann Christian Brand, *Laxenburg seen from the lodge on the Hanawiese towards Mödling* (part of the cycle *Heron Hunt in Laxenburg*), oil on canvas, 1759. The painting depicts a heron hunt near Laxenburg Castle (in the centre of the painting), watched by Empress Maria Theresa and her court on the balustrade on the right. Almost invisible to the viewers on the ground and in front of the painting, two gyrfalcons are already 'waiting' in the sky to attack the heron coming from the right
Source: Museum Belvedere, Vienna, inv. no. 2577.

that made up a falcon hunt in Laxenburg.[28] One of these paintings documents a moment like the one Montesquieu described in his diary: the two circling white gyrfalcons and the approaching heron are almost invisible high up in the blue sky (Figure 3.1). Yet a connoisseur studying the painting that hung in the castle of Laxenburg could anticipate the imminent dramatic clash that would culminate in the fall and fixation of the heron on the ground; this is depicted in another painting.

Brand's almost photographic landscape depiction shows what fascinated early modern observers about falconry of the high flight mode: to watch a bloody drama taking place in a huge, three-dimensional theatre in which earth and heaven seemed to be connected.[29] Whereas more conventional contemporary

[28] The series *Die Reiherbeize von Laxenburg* (that illustrates not only a heron hunt, but also hunts on hares and kites) was originally on display in the castle of Laxenburg and was transferred to the collections of the Belvedere Museum in Vienna in 1922. On Brand and his innovative approach to eighteenth-century landscape portraiture, see esp. Krapf, 'Johann Christian Brand'.

[29] On the sky as a constitutive element of the 'new dialectics of the landscape space', see Boehm, *Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen*, p. 76.

hunting paintings put the sovereign and his court in the centre or focused exclusively on the fighting animals,[30] Brand confined the empress and her courtiers on the balcony to the periphery of the painting, turning them into almost insignificant figures in his astonishingly large scenario. Centring on the landscape by decentring the human and animal actors, the painting shows the multifaceted character of a falcon hunt in which several networks of interaction came into loose contact. While for the courtiers on the ground, watching the battle in the air that was accompanied by trumpets was merely one episode in a series of conversations and distractions, the circling falcons' attention must have been primarily directed at three other elements: the characteristics of their space of manoeuvre composed of air and light; the courtly falconers who shouted and lured on the ground to direct their flight; and the approaching heron as the destined target of attack.

Whereas the French kings preferred multifunctional parks for their falcon hunts, the imperial hunting park in Laxenburg presents a building complex with surrounding landscape especially designed for falconry. This setting involved buildings to house birds, dogs, horses, falconers, and courtiers as well as special compounds for game animals, training equipment for the falcons in the surrounding grounds, special meadows for the chase on horseback and pavilions to watch them. In the chateau itself, a décor of falcon portraits and hunting scenes on the walls and stuffed falcons and game animals in the emperor's apartments also made clear what the key activity and major theme of conversation during the spring weeks should be.[31] Laxenburg became a model for similar falconry castles and parks that were built by princes in the Holy Roman Empire in the following decades such as Lustheim in Schleißheim near Munich, Wabern near Kassel, and Falkenlust ('falcons' pleasure') between Cologne and Bonn.[32] Through family alliances, this model of landscape design for falconry also spread to other regions in Europe such as the Habsburg Netherlands, where the Governess Maria Elisabeth of Austria (r. 1725–41) watched falcon hunts on herons from pavilions that resembled those in Laxenburg where she had spent spring weeks in her youth.[33]

In all European courts, the main hunting season for the courtly raptors was spring. A mixture of organizational reasons and cultural preferences led to this choice. After the liturgical calendar, the sequence of the hunting seasons was probably the most decisive factor for the structuration of court life.[34] From spring

[30] On these two modes, see Weber, 'Die Macht der Meuten', pp. 267–72. These two modes of representation can also be found in paintings of falcon hunts. See also the notes in Krapf, 'Johann Christian Brand', p. 11.

[31] See the description in Küchelbecker, *Allerneuste Nachricht* (1730), pp. 802–3.

[32] Schmid, *Schloß Schleißheim*; *Höfische Jagd in Hessen*; Hansmann, *Schloss Falkenlust*.

[33] The governess also supervised falcon training herself and exchanged letters with her brother, Emperor Charles VI, about falconry. See Hertel, *Maria Elisabeth*, pp. 291–2.

[34] See Salvadori, *La chasse*, p. 113; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, p. 50.

to autumn, the sovereigns and their courts usually moved from one hunting residence to another to hunt different sorts of game. The court of the Austrian Habsburgs under Charles VI usually followed a relatively regular sequence of hunts. The year began with fox baitings and snipe hunts in the Prater in March. Then, the court moved to Laxenburg to practise falconry in April and May, followed by hunts on red deer in the Vienna forests in June and July. In August, ring hunts (*eingestellte* or *gesperrte Jagden*) that culminated in a big and bloody water hunt in the Danube were held. In September, the emperors hunted small game such as hares and partridges before attacking big boars and stags in October and November.[35]

From the animals' viewpoint, this arrangement had both advantages and drawbacks. It ensured that the game populations in the different woods had sufficient time to regenerate and that especially the big game mammals had a closed season to raise their offspring in the first half of the year. However, the spring hunts caused stress for herons and kites whose breeding season is spring, which might be an important reason for their significant decrease in the second half of the eighteenth century, as we will see in the next section. Conservationist reasons were of little importance; it was rather the established cultural association between springtime and falconry, represented on numerous contemporary images of the cycle of seasons and ages, that determined falconry's place in the calendar of court life (Figure 3.2).

If we consider the *longue durée*, the evolution of this cultural nexus between spring and the practice of falconry was nevertheless influenced by experiences in the interaction with raptors. Although the authors of early modern falconry treatises became aware that falcons can hunt during the entire year,[36] they largely agreed that hunting performance decreased in summer. At this time, the raptors moult, which—beyond the question of performance—made their flights less attractive for a courtly public. Most notably, the continental European summers were too hot for the courts' preferred Nordic gyrfalcons. A falconry party in midsummer would have made it more probable that the raptors would refuse to hunt, search for cold water or, even worse, fly away to the north. In a similar manner, the specialists agreed that in autumn there was a higher probability that a peregrine would escape, following its migratory instincts.[37] In winter, finally, apart from the reduced comfort for the attending courtiers, certain migratory game birds would also be more difficult to encounter. All things considered, spring therefore seemed to be the best season for hunting with trained raptors, a

[35] Mitis, *Jagd und Schützen am Hof Karls VI*, p. 36 and *passim*; Seitschek, *Die Tagebücher Kaiser Karls VI*, pp. 314–19.

[36] D'Arcussia explicitly refers to the behaviour of wild falcons when arguing against the belief that a moulting falcon could not hunt. D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', in *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 6.

[37] See d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 148.

MAIVS.
Maius, quo veteres soliti sacra reddere Maiæ,
Cantu auium gaudet, fronde virente viget.
Aucupibus præbet, qua fallant tempora, prædam:
Ledâ progenitos sidus habet Geminos.

Figure 3.2 Jacques Callot (after Adriaen and Hans Collaert), *The Month of May*, engraving, *c.*1607/9
Source: BnF Gallica, id. no. ark:/12148/btv1b8496099j.

convention to which the organization of the princely falconries and the international bird market adapted.

Yet even in such an organized setting, there were elements that could ruin the party. Besides the agency of the involved animals, the weather was the main variable that made falcon hunts an activity with an uncertain outcome. Clouds, rain, and wind did not only diminish the pleasure of watching the birds fly (if they could be seen at all); they also made it more probable that the hunt would fail and that falcons were carried away by the wind and did not return.[38] For these reasons, scheduled falconry trips were often cancelled because of wind and weather. On 29 March 1694, for instance, the marquis de Dangeau noted in his diary that King Louis XIV—who was visiting the prince de Condé in Chantilly for three days—'wanted to go flying, yet the strong wind prevented him from doing so; instead, he did some baiting where he killed a lot of game'.[39] Considerate of his subjects, the king decided on 12 and 13 April 1712 not to go hunting with his

[38] According to d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 148–9, a good falconer had to anticipate the raptor's inclination to go with the wind, especially in summer and early autumn.
[39] Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. 4, p. 468. On the hunting frequency at the French royal court, see Salvadori, *La chasse*, 199–215; on Chantilly as a site of princely hunts, Laporte, *Chasse à courre*.

birds near Marly because the soil was humid and would be damaged by the falconers following the hunt, causing a significant loss of grain to the farmers.[40]

The emperors' hunting diaries, too, can be read like weather reports. Spring 1715, for instance, saw particularly bad weather in Laxenburg, preventing Emperor Charles VI from hunting successfully with his falcons for several days. On 27 April, he noted 'nothing because of wind', on 30 April 'nothing, strong rain', on 1 May 'nothing, strong rain' again, on 2 May 'nothing because of heavy water', on 3 May 'nothing because of water', on 4 May 'all day nothing because of water, wind', on 5 May no hunt, on 6 May still 'nothing because of wind'. Finally, on 7 May, there was still 'strong wind', but at least the falcons could catch one duck in the morning and one heron in the afternoon for their imperial master.[41] Courtly falcon hunts were thus embedded in highly structured spatial and temporal settings, but still exposed to the contingences of the weather and other 'natural' phenomena.

3.2 The Government of Game Animals

'Nothing, strong rain' in Emperor Charles VI's hunting diary of 30 April 1715 and the notorious '*rien*' in the diary of the French King Louis XVI on 14 July 1789 both indicate that there were no animals killed or caught on that specific day.[42] On more successful days, the number, species and sometimes also age or weight of killed animals were specified in the sovereigns' own handwriting. Between 1775 and 1791, Louis XVI noted the death of more than 190,000 animals in his hunting diaries (most of them small game, but also including 1,274 stags), before he was forced to give up his hunting career due to the Revolution.[43] Compared to this huge number, the more than 50,000 animals that Charles VI counted for the period between 1712 and 1736 seem relatively modest, yet they include considerably more game animals that were hunted with the support of trained falcons, among them 1,654 herons, 434 crows and 186 red kites between 1712 and 1726.[44] Even in the rainy and windy spring of 1715, the emperor noted that his falcons

[40] Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. 14, p. 126. The following day, the king decided to postpone his hunt for the same reason.

[41] Quotes from Charles VI' 'Jagd-Calender', 1715, HHStA HausA, Sammelbände 2: Tagebücher Kaiser Karl VI, 2/19, fol. 37r–v.

[42] Louis XVI, *Journal*, p. 136.

[43] See Salvadori, *La chasse*, p. 208. The hunting diaries and accounts of Louis XVI in the king's own handwriting are preserved in AN, AE/I/4/3 and AE/II/1281.

[44] Between 1712 and 1726, the emperor counted a total of 34,637 animals, and between 1732 and 1736, another 15,810, which makes 50,447 animals in total, not including the missing numbers for the period between 1727 and 1731. See HHStA HausA, Sammelbände 2: Tagebücher Kaiser Karls VI., 'Eigenhändige Abschusstabellen [*sic*] Kaiser Karls VI'.

had caught thirty herons, five red kites, two crows, a raven, fourteen ducks, eight magpies, and five hares in Laxenburg.[45]

Such impressive lists of killed or caught animals point to the obvious but not trivial fact that a sufficient number of animals had to be available on the sovereigns' hunting grounds. The general development from rather spontaneous falconry trips to prearranged scenes was related to the changing status of the hunted animals. In the spontaneous type of courtly hunt, it was the game that determined the location. In contrast, the ceremonious type of courtly hunts required special efforts to guarantee the game animals' presence at a given moment in a given place. These efforts will be analysed in this section, with the conclusion that the game animals that appear on the hunting lists of sovereigns were only partly wild animals. Some of them were even more 'domesticated' than their chasers, the trained raptors. Beginning with France and continuing with Austria, I will discuss the different efforts that were undertaken to ensure the game's availability for falconry, ranging from laws protecting the animal population from human intervention to the creation of sophisticated breeding stations.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the French crown started to realize that game populations in the woods were not an endless natural resource. In 1515, King Francis I stated that the royal forests were protected areas and established penalties for subjects who caused damage to the game population, ranging from fines up to capital punishment for those who illicitly killed stags, the king's favourite game.[46] In the following decades, an increasing number of hunting districts under special protection, the so-called *capitaineries*, were set up around the king's residences.[47] The captains of the hunts and their lieutenants were responsible for the protection of the royal forests and the game populations that lived within. Simultaneously, the regulations became more and more detailed, although their implementation remained a constant challenge. In Henri IV's detailed ordinance of 1597, game animals for the falcon hunt, such as partridges pheasants, waterfowl, and hares were explicitly defined as protected species; and the 1601 ordinance added that even those who touched the nests of such animals would be punished, regardless of their rank.[48] When Louis XIII went on his falconry trips in the surroundings of Paris, there was thus an augmented chance of

[45] Charles VI, 'Jagd-Calender', 1715, HHStA HausA, Sammelbände 2: Tagebücher Kaiser Karls VI., 2/19, fol. 38r.

[46] See the so-called *grande ordonnance* of Francis I from May 1515, ratified by the *parlement de Paris* in the following year, edited in Baudrillart, *Recueil chronologique, vol. 1: Traité général des eaux et forêts*, pp. 2–13. On the general development of the royal hunting legislation in France, see Salvadori, *La chasse*, pp. 16–36; Schmidt, *Jagd und Herrschaft*, pp. 111–48.

[47] On the legal status of these districts, see Gaultier, 'La capitainerie royal des chasses'.

[48] See the detailed ordinance of King Henri IV, May 1597 (registered in 1610), ed. in Baudrillart, *Recueil chronologique, vol. 1: Traité général des eaux et forêts*, pp. 20–30, art. 36 (p. 29), and the ordonnance of Henri IV, June 1601, ibid., pp. 30–3, art. II (p. 31).

meeting game animals in the royal *capitaineries* or in enclosed compounds for rabbits called *garennes*.

Despite these efforts to protect game animals, their reproduction did not keep up with the court's rising demand. Herons and kites that the court used for representative falcon hunts in the high flight mode became rare in Île-de-France. Moreover, the pheasant, a species that was originally imported from Asia, never acclimatized to harsh winters and dangerous predators like the fox, while the domestic partridge had difficulties with the humid weather around Paris, too.[49] Therefore, the royal administration intensified its efforts to populate the king's lands and woods with game animals. On the one hand, the protectoral practices were reinforced. Hunting grounds were enclosed with fences and specialized foxhunters (*renardiers*) appear on the royal payment lists for most hunting districts.[50] In Colbert's detailed ordinance of 1669, the preservation of the nesting sites of quails, partridges, and pheasants became an explicit duty for the guards.[51]

On the other hand, the reproduction of certain game animals was stimulated through the creation of special compounds and buildings within the parks. Already under King Henri IV, some heronries and pheasantries had been created in the royal parks of Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain in order to nurture game animals under human control; they were destined to serve the kitchens or to be released later for hunts.[52] Under Louis XIV, the expansion of the park of Versailles led to a new wave in the creation of such breeding institutions. In several *faisanderies* that stood under the supervision of a *faisandier*, pheasants and partridges were fed with high-protein food (ants' eggs and cheese) in order to stimulate their reproduction. Their eggs were then bred by chicken hens in heated rooms. Once hatched from their eggs, the young birds grew up under protected conditions before being released to the king's park where they could move freely—until they became the target of the king's shotgun or, occasionally, of his hawks.[53] At about the same time, a heronry and a house to host red kites (*milanière*) were created in Noisy-le-Roi near Versailles, specifically destined to serve the needs of the royal falconry.[54] Although ephemeral, the existence of these breeding houses underlines the intention of controlling all aspects of the hunt, including the development of the game species. The semi-domesticated game animals were now an integral

[49] On the rarity of partridges around Paris compared to the Provence, see d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 277–8.

[50] AN, Z 1a 491, 'Etats généraux des officiers de la Maison du roi: Vénerie, 1553–1687'.

[51] Ordonnance de Louis XIV (countersigned by Colbert), August 1669, ed. in Baudrillart, *Recueil chronologique, vol. 1: Traité général des eaux et forêts*, pp. 41–92, art. XXX–IX (p. 86).

[52] See Pieragnoli, 'La cour de Henri IV', pp. 9, 20–1; Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, pp. 67–8.

[53] See Quenet, *Versailles*, pp. 114–18; Weber, 'Zahmes Wild?', pp. 96–8. On the breeding practices in early modern pheasantries, see Herget/Busch, 'Fasanerie'; Hünemörder, '"Phasianus"', pp. 251–68.

[54] However, these institutions were given up again after some years due to their high costs and the French king's decreasing interest in falconry on herons and kites; see Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. 1, p. 188 (4 April 1685).

part of the great theatre of court life, mostly hidden behind the scenes but always in waiting position to play their part in the final act of a royal hunt.

The Austrian and other German-speaking courts followed the same model with some delay, but in the eighteenth century they continued to intensify their efforts in game management related to falconry when this form of hunting had already lost most of its appeal in France. Increasingly, the dispersed practices of game management that had evolved since the sixteenth century merged into a coordinated 'polipolitical dispositif' to measure and increase the game populations that the practice of courtly falconry required.[55] In this evolving system of institutions and practices, the court of Vienna addressed the subjects not only as potential poachers but also as potential collaborators in order to set up a 'well-ordered police state' in the woods and plains—an endeavour that spawned its own contradictions.[56] Between 1673 and 1750, several imperial ordinances were issued to protect game animals for falconry. These laws prohibited subjects of any rank from hunting, 'disturbing', or destroying the eggs of 'crows, red kites, wild ducks, herons, partridges, hares, pheasants and suchlike' in an area of several miles around the Danube near Vienna and around the hunting grounds of the castles of Laxenburg and Ebersdorf—measures that were explicitly justified with the use of these animals for the sovereign's 'pleasure of hunting with Our falcons'.[57]

Yet the implementation of these rules remained an ongoing challenge. In 1776, the secretary of the imperial falconry lamented that subjects and even members of the imperial hunting corps regularly shot at kites, magpies, crows, ducks, and herons, which caused considerable damage to the falconry in Laxenburg. Some of the hunters would even detach the claws of killed raptors in order to get rewards from the authorities.[58] This points to the problem that the same species was sometimes protected and at other times fought. Thus, in some parts of the Austrian monarchy and other regions of the Holy Roman Empire, subjects received monetary rewards for killing 'harmful' birds—including goshawks, grey herons, crows, and raven—from the authorities who tried to fight predators and other wild animals that caused damage to livestock, fish, or harvests.[59] These

[55] On the use of Foucault's concepts of governmentality and biopolitics—introduced in his lecture on *Security, Territory, Population* (1977–8)—for analysing human–animal relations, see Asdal/Drglitrø/Hinchcliffe, eds, *Humans, Animals, and Biopolitics*, and specifically for royal hunting parks, Weber, ed., *Hege und Herrschaft*.

[56] See Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State*, and, more recently, Iseli, *Gute Policey*. Hunting legislation was understood as a part of these administrative practices; see Schennach, *Jagdrecht, Wilderei und 'gute Policey'*.

[57] Printed ordinance of Her Imperial Majesty Maria Teresa, Vienna, 6 November 1747, confirming the former ordinances from 1673, 1675, 1717, and 1734, AVA, FHKA, SUS, Patente 86.

[58] Martschläger to the local authorities (*Kreiswärter*), Vienna, 12 June 1776, HHStA OJäA 856, Fasz. 6, no. 17.

[59] See Kumerloeve, 'Habsburgische Beizjagddokumente', pp. 61–2. Evidence from the Berlin archives that I have analysed make clear that hawks, herons, owls, magpies, crows, and raven were among the species for which one got premiums; see GStAPK, I. HA, Rep. 36, no. 2322/2. On the discourses about vermin in eighteenth-century Germany, see Windelen, 'Mäuse, Maden, Maulwürfe' (on raptors and other birds esp. p. 52); Seitz, 'Raubgesindel'.

contradictory measures were arguably an important reason for the decline of kite and heron populations in Lower Austria.

In order to counteract the diminishment of favoured game animals, the officers of the emperor followed the French example, establishing breeding places to stimulate the game populations' reproduction. In the course of the eighteenth century, they established a dozen pheasantries (*Fasanerien*) or pheasants' gardens (*Fasanengärten*) in the surroundings of Vienna, including one in the park of Laxenburg. In the 1720s, pheasant roosters and hens were systematically exchanged between different parts of the Austrian monarchy in order to increase the number of these colourful birds that were much in favour at the emperor's court for the table and for the hunt with shotguns or flying falcons.[60] Simultaneously, special efforts were made to ensure a sufficient number of herons and kites. In Laxenburg and Neustädt, two heronries (*Raigerstadl*) under the supervision of a herons' keeper (*Raigerwarther*), were to motivate herons to nest near the falconry.[61] Among other duties, the two heron keepers and their servants were responsible for maintaining nests on high trees where free-moving herons and kites would find perfect conditions to lay their eggs and multiply the population; a practice that we also find in the parks of other German princes such as the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel (Figure 3.3). This mode of game management was based on incentives for wild animals rather than active breeding in captivity. It caused relatively little costs, but its success depended on the varying moods of the birds to accept the offered location.

Despite all these efforts, the number of breeding herons in Laxenburg decreased dramatically in the second half of the eighteenth century from more than two hundred pairs to about eighty. In March 1777, the herons' keeper in Laxenburg—who regularly counted the herons and kites in the eyries—became even more concerned after having counted only twenty-two herons in the stands.[62] Although the court had already established the practice that herons and kites that had been caught by the falcons were released again if they were not harmed, Laxenburg's falconry ecosystem was in disequilibrium; this could only be counterbalanced by additional financial expense. In the 1770s and 1780s, the imperial falconry spent 3,000 thaler annually to import captive herons and kites from Hungary and other countries in order to satisfy the court's ongoing demand for representative game birds.[63] Besides the political and cultural reasons that will be discussed in the final chapter of this book, the collapse of the ecosystem in

[60] 'Fasan-Lieferungs-Acta ab Anno [1]724 bis [1]735', HHStA HA OJäA 25, Neustädter Fasangartenrechnungen (1733–43).

[61] For more details on the following, see Weber, 'Rechnen mit der dritten Dimension'.

[62] Report of the heron keeper of Laxenburg, Venantius Weinanz, dated 9 March 1777, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 7, no. 9.

[63] See Saint Julien to the empress, Vienna, 2 June 1772, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 2, no. 21, and the passport letter for Christian Tell, signed by the Count of Saint Julien, Vienna, 1 June 1772, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 2, no. 20, stipulating the delivery of a certain number of herons from Hungary every year.

Figure 3.3 Johann Heinrich Tischbein the Elder, *The Heron Hunt Cycle*, oil on canvas, 1764. This painting shows members of the court of the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel—including the artist seated on the left—visiting the heron aeries near Wilhelmsthal Castle

Source: Museum Schloss Fasanerie, Fulda, inv. no. B 392/Kulturstiftung des Hauses Hessen.

Laxenburg's hunting park and the related increase of costs was another main reason for Emperor Francis II to close his falconry in 1793.

To conclude, a closer look at game animals involved in the hunt with falcons shows that even their lives do not conform to the nature–civilization dichotomy. Whereas the aerial battles were staged as encounters between 'civilized' hunters and wild beasts, the living conditions of the animals involved might not have differed much in daily life. Falcons, red kites, and herons were caught in the wild and transported over great distances to the princes' courts where they were to play their roles during a public hunt, willingly or unwillingly. Most of the pheasants that appear on the killing lists of early modern rulers were actually bred under human supervision—as a population, they were much more 'domesticated' than the courtly falcons. For the crows and magpies, less human care was necessary, but even they were sometimes protected by law in order to serve the princes' pleasure. While the status and living conditions of game animals varied significantly, they all increasingly became the object—or rather the subjects—of governmental practices that turned princely parks into laboratories of biopolitics.[64]

3.3 The Dramatic Scripts of Royal Hunts

Beyond all symbolic qualities, the ultimate *raison d'être* of falcons at court was their success as assistants or 'intelligent weapons' in royal hunts.[65] Not only the number of fatal attacks on game animals counted but also the way the tamed raptors performed in the aerial fights. The decline of hawking in the early modern period did not lead to less variety in the practice of falconry. Instead, treatises and hunting reports of the period testify to a growing variety of hunting flight techniques with falcons, some of which did not even fit the classical distinction between *haut vol* and *bas vol* and were thus called 'mid-flight falconry' (*moyenne volerie*).[66] This section will first reconstruct the different scripted chases in courtly falconry. Then it will show that despite the careful arrangement of the scene and the game, and in contrast to other types of courtly hunting, the hunt with trained raptors was still marked by a high degree of unpredictability regarding the outcome of the chase.

The issue of predictability is key for understanding the place of falconry in the social life of early modern courts. This social life was increasingly strictly regulated through written ordinances and implicit ceremonial codes. In the domain of hunting, this development corresponded to the rise of the coursing hunt, or *chasse à courre*, during which foxes, wolves, boars, and especially stags were

[64] This is also the case for game used for other forms of hunting. See Weber, 'Sein zum Tode', pp. 26–32.

[65] See Hadjinicolaou, 'Wie die Macht des Königs', pp. 105–6.

[66] D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', in *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 34.

chased with the aid of a pack of running hounds. This hunting method combined complexity with predictability. Once a stag was defined as the object of the chase, followed by a pack of one hundred or more hounds, dozens of hunters on horseback, and a large group of male and female courtiers in coaches, there was little chance for the game to escape alive. According to the hunting statistics of Louis XV for his domain in Rambouillet between 1743 and 1773, the king's *grande* and *petite meute* took 863 stags in 808 chases whereas only eighty-six of the stags (9 per cent) were able to escape.[67] The point was thus not *if* the stag was surrounded and solemnly killed but rather how much time this process took (the longer, the better) and whether all rules of the chase were correctly followed. Every participant had a clearly defined, hierarchically determined role; and the stag hunt turned into a perfect ritual of sovereignty.[68]

Ideally, the falcons performed in the air what the trained hounds acted out on the ground. In his *La conférence des fauconniers,* first published in 1625, the French nobleman Charles d'Arcussia demonstrated to his European readers how a perfect royal falcon hunt on kites should proceed, describing in detail a hunt that he had watched at the court of Louis XIII.[69] First, two eagle owls, the natural enemies of kites and other diurnal raptors, to which a fox's brush had been attached in order to increase their attractiveness, lured a passing kite from the surroundings to the site of the chase. When a kite (preferably a red kite, *Milvus milvus*) appeared, the king's falconers threw four gyrfalcons from their fists; they flew in the direction of their target. According to d'Arcussia, the kite immediately 'realized' that this 'enterprise' was undertaken for him, and tried to escape by flying high up into the sky. Only the spectators with keen eyesight could see what happened now: one gyrfalcon, called *l'Ostarde* (the bustard), a 'very jaunty bird', was the first to attack the kite with a rapid, sharp hit ('*pointe*') from above. Then,

> the others gave him hits, too; not all at the same time, but one by one, like blacksmiths on the anvil, with a great noise made by the beating of their wings. When one chases him, the other flies at him, and when the third bird had not yet hit him, the fourth already choked him, so that, being attacked and attacked ceaselessly by one after another, the kite did not know how to resist.…[H]e begins to scream and to wail, seeing no ruse he could use anymore. In the same moment, one of the gyrfalcons pins him down, and the others join in; *et voilà*, the five birds come down to earth together.[70]

The royal falconers hurried to the place where the birds held their prey, since it could still severely injure the precious falcons with its beak or claws; the king and

[67] Devred, 'The Royal Stag', p. 99.
[68] Salvadori, *La chasse*, esp. pp. 225–43; Merlotti, ed., *Le cacce reali*; Schmidt, *Jagd und Herrschaft*.
[69] D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), pp. 3–4; 1883 edn, pp. 18–20.
[70] D'Arcussia, *La conférence des fauconniers* (1883 edn), pp. 19–20.

the chief of his cabinet's falconry also rushed to the scene. In the final act of the kite's tragedy, the falconers broke its legs and then tore off its head before giving the falcons their reward for the successful hunt: a chicken decorated with the victim's feathers.[71]

One and a half centuries later, the *lieutenant de chasse* of Versailles and naturalist philosopher Charles-Georges Leroy (1723–1789) described the chase of kites and other sorts of the *chasse au vol* for the *Encyclopédie* in more prosaic terms. In contrast to the discourse of the falconry treatises, Leroy was rather interested in the behavioural patterns of the involved animals, which makes his protoethological accounts a particularly interesting source.[72] The basic elements of the kite chase are the same as in d'Arcussia's description. Attracted by the strangely decorated eagle owls, the kite first descends and then turns back when recognizing the gyrfalcons or saker falcons that were thrown by the falconers (Figure 3.4). The kite usually tried to escape by climbing higher and higher. 'Hence, the scene of the combat takes place in a region of the air that is so high that often the eyes struggle to follow.'[73] Like the chase of the heron that followed more or less the same rules, this hunt was especially dangerous for the falcons who, even in a group, 'sometimes risked their life' when attacking the larger game animals. Given that this unnatural behaviour of the falcons could only be the effect of special training, Leroy agreed that from a technical point of view, 'these two flights have pre-eminence, given their rarity, the strength of the combatants, and the merit of having overcome such a difficulty'.[74]

Considered as a dramatic spectacle with symbolic significance, especially the flight on herons became a widespread topic for artistic representation which in turn structured the course and perception of the hunts. In poems or emblems, the aerial fights were presented as combats between Good and Evil—here the proud, greedy heron who stole masses of fish from rivers and ponds, there the noble, loyal falcon who risked her life for the reestablishment of justice and order (Figure 3.5). Probably also in order to compensate for the lack of visibility, contemporary artists like the Flemish painter Frans Snyders (1579–1657) and his school pictured the highlights of the combats high up in the sky from an imagined close-up perspective (Figure 3.6). Through paintings that hung in the hunting residences or etchings that were sold on the market, the courtiers watching falcon hunts were familiar with these pictures that helped to imagine the fights that took place high up in the air.

[71] On other occasions, as d'Arcussia does not fail to mention, the king showed mercy by releasing the captured kite out of the windows of the Louvre—deprived of two long feathers from the tail to remember the lost aerial fight: D'Arcussia, *La conférence des fauconniers* (1883 edn), p. 21.

[72] Charles-Georges Leroy, art. 'Chasse au vol', *Encylopédie*, ed. Diderot/d'Alembert, vol. 17, pp. 440–1. On Leroy (or Le Roy) and his interest in the natural behaviour of animals, see Bourdin, 'L'anthropomorphisme de Charles-Georges Leroy'; Quenet, *Versailles*, pp. 140–55; Vogt, 'Tiere der Jagd'.

[73] Leroy, art. 'Chasse au vol', *Encylopédie*, ed. Diderot/d'Alembert, vol. 17, p. 441.

[74] Ibid.

H.
Joh. El. Ridinger inv. del. et exc. Aug. Vind.
Marc. El. Ridinger Sculpsit.
Falconier bricht dē Schüchü vom bodē aufnehmēd. Valet de Faucon levant le Hibou de la terre.

Figure 3.4 *Falconeer lifting an owl from the ground*, copperplate engraving by Johann E. and Martin E. Ridinger, *c.*1750. The engraving shows a captive eagle owl attracting some crows. A fox's brush is attached to the owl by a long line, which is used to excite the owl and make it more visible and audible to its natural enemies. The lured birds were then attacked from the air by trained falcons

Source: National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, acc. no. 1975.81.34.

Figure 3.5 *Heron Hunt*, bronze medal designed by Johann Samuel Götzinger, *c.*1760. The legend on the reverse of the medal, which was struck on the orders of Landgrave Ludwig VIII of Hessen-Darmstadt, reads: 'Return to the more powerful what you have unlawfully stolen, you perfidious (creature)'. This motif can be read as an allusion to the events of the Seven Years War when the Landgrave was allied with Maria Theresa against King Frederick II of Prussia, who had annexed Silesia in the 1740s
Source: Sincona AG, Zurich, Auction 51, 23 October 2018, lot 3151.

In order to increase the dramatic effect, the decisive turning points of the hunts—such as the appearance of the heron, the attacks by the falcons, and the fall of the fighting birds—were additionally accompanied by timpani and trumpets. The Italian traveller Alessandro Bichi-Ruspoli, who watched a heron hunt in Potsdam with the court of the Elector of Brandenburg in May 1696, noted that this kind of background music was not only intended to turn the interest of the card-playing courtiers towards the sky. 'The tumultuous sound of the martial instruments' was to increase the attacking falcons' 'bravery and power'.[75] Combined with the shouts of the luring falconers on the ground, such hunts must also have been a dense synaesthetic experience for the animals involved—even though they were probably rather irritated than stimulated by the unexpected noise.

Notwithstanding the fact that they were 'less noble and less demanding', the falcons' hunts on crows and magpies were also considered spectacular. According to Leroy, the hunt on crows was 'one of the most pleasurable', because of the variety of conditions, the fact that they were performed closer to the public, and the more active role of the human hunters. Like the kites, the crows were attracted by the use of an eagle owl. When they saw the falcons—usually peregrines—that

[75] Quoted after Genthe, 'Die Falknerei unter den Hohenzollern', p. 286. On the history of hunting music, see Pöschl, *Jagdmusik*, who also briefly discusses a signal for the beginning and end of a falcon hunt on p. 194.

Figure 3.6 Frans Snyders (school), *Two Falcons and a Goshawk Attacking a Heron*, oil on canvas, mid-seventeenth century. The painting shows the attack of three falcons on a heron high up in the sky, as it was imagined by observers on the ground. The heron is in the typical inverted position with its wings outstretched to cushion its fall to the ground

Source: Nationalmuseum Stockholm, inv. NMLeu 30.

were thrown from horseback in full gallop, they would first try to escape by climbing. Yet as Leroy observes, they then tended to descend 'with unbelievable speed' when the falcons came too near, and tried to hide themselves in a tree. When this happened, the falcons began to circle in the air to 'wait' for them, while the falconers 'came to the tree and forced the crow with their cries to leave her

hiding place'. When this happened, the falcons could finally perform a full stoop and kill the bird in the air.[76]

In contrast to the crows, the more timid magpies were usually only hunted with the wait-on flight technique, which implied more distance communication between the professional falconers and their birds through luring and shouting, but less sportive activity by the prince. According to Leroy, the magpie's fear of the circling falcons was sometimes so strong 'that she rather lets herself be taken by the hunter than exposing herself to the stoop of the bird whom she dreads'.[77] Interesting from a technical point of view, but unheroic and sometimes even annoying, falcon hunts on magpies were almost never represented in paintings.

In contrast to the other types of falconry, the 'flight for fields and river' (*vol pour champs et rivière*) seems to be an unspecific umbrella term at first sight.[78] Not only the animals that were chased formed a heterogeneous group uniting pheasants, partridges, ducks, and hares, but the same was true for the raptors of the river parties: gyrfalcons and peregrines, but also goshawks and kestrels. The category thus also transcends the limits between 'true' falconry (using a lure to recall the birds) and hawking 'with the fist'. Yet, they all had in common that they relied on the assistance of another group of players: dogs, especially pointers and greyhounds.

The hunt therefore consisted of a fascinating interplay of trained animals of different species. First, the pointers scented out the prey usually hiding in bushes, woods, or reed. Then, one to three falcons were thrown and 'waited' in the air—or, in the case of goshawks, on a tree—until the dogs flushed on the prey which hurried out of its hideout. The raptor then attacked and killed the prey in the air (peregrine on pheasants, partridges, and ducks) or chased it and took it near the ground (gyrfalcon or goshawk on hares or partridges), eventually supported by fast-running, barking greyhounds who prevented the prey from hiding or from swimming away—scenarios in which a falcon was unable to attack. The falconers then followed on horseback (Figure 3.7). Sometimes, the dogs also took over the quarry, which was fixed by the raptors on the ground, and brought it to the human master who would kill it with a knife. The flight over river and fields thus reunited the noble animal trinity that surrounded the figure of the knight in the medieval imagination: falcon, horse, and dog.[79]

Being practised at courts as well as by the landed gentry, the field and river flight was certainly the most widespread form of falconry up to the seventeenth century. According to d'Arcussia, the hunt on partridges was the preferred of all other sorts of falconry practised by noblemen because you could watch the 'marvellous descents' of the hawks and the various 'ruses' of the partridges and see

[76] Leroy, art. 'Chasse au vol', *Encylopédie*, ed. Diderot/d'Alembert, vol. 17, p. 441.
[77] Ibid. [78] Ibid.
[79] On this figure, see the Introduction, note 42.

Figure 3.7 Johann Christian Brand, *Laxenburg from the Münkendorfer Lusthaus towards the south-west* (part of the cycle *Heron Hunt in Laxenburg*), oil on canvas, 1758. The detail shows the interspecies team play between a white gyrfalcon and a greyhound, both chasing a fleeing hare on the ground, while the falconers follow on horseback
Source: Museum Belvedere, Vienna, inv. no. 2575.

'our dogs performing brilliantly'.[80] Moreover, this type of hunt could be practised almost year-round, even when the weather was windy, and it supplied the noblemen's table with delicious food. However, as we have seen, this form of falconry declined among the common nobility during the seventeenth century, and Europe's sovereigns preferred practising the 'royal flights'. Thus, despite the greater variety and delicious taste of the game, the *vols pour champs et rivière* or *Revier-Partheyen* were ranked lower and not as well equipped in the courtly falconries of the Baroque age.

In the eighteenth century, some princes even toyed with the idea of getting rid of this form of hunting altogether. Interestingly, such attempts could be countered with the argument that the other flights depended on the party and its specialized dogs for training purposes. In 1773, the master falconer of the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, Von Canstein, argued that the most prestigious Icelandic falcons of the heron party required regular flights on other game such as hares when the season did not allow practising on herons:

[80] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 278–9.

> No falconer would ever be capable of making falcons fit for herons and to keep them in good exercise and breath if he could not from time to time hunt hares with them in winter and spring (when the caught hares are delivered to the princely game house for breeding); otherwise this type of falcons [i.e. the Icelandic gyrfalcons] must be totally eliminated, too.[81]

For the same reason, the two pointers of the landgrave's falconry 'who chase the flushed hare so that he cannot hide in hedges and copses' had to remain in place. No dogs, no hunt on hares, no fit falcons for hunting herons: the line of argument reveals the interdependencies between various species and types of falconry, and between secluded training and public hunts in the practice of courtly falconry. From a bird's perspective, it also shows that the same Nordic gyrfalcons performed different types of flight in the course of a year, a practice that comes closer to the natural flexibility of these birds of prey than the schematic distribution to different sorts of hunting in falconry treatises and the iconography of falconry might suggest.

The killing of the game was not the final act of a courtly falcon hunt; it was not even a necessary element. Herons and kites were typically released after being ringed or otherwise marked, a practice that was celebrated and visualized as a symbolic act of princely clemency. In reality, it rather reveals the necessity to preserve the endangered populations of these representative game animals, which in addition were not palatable.[82] The practice of releasing the fallen animal combatant thus once more underlines the theatrical, staged character of princely hunts. These spectacles consisted of truly dangerous combats high up in the sky, but did not necessarily include the final demise of the principle animal 'actors'.

What really concluded a falcon hunt was the feeding of the successful raptors after their return to the falconer's lure or fist. As we have seen above, immediate feeding was a basic technique in the art of falconry destined to motivate the intelligent raptors for future cooperation. Yet, during a courtly hunt, the practice also had a more symbolic function, like the 'ceremony' of the *curée* in the *chasse à courre* where the assembled hunting society assisted the dogs' feeding with parts of the hunted stag, backed by the blowing of horns.[83] In the case of the falcons, the reward—called *curée* in French, too, and *Atzung* in German—could consist of parts of the caught game animal, or of a compensatory feeding with the flesh of a pigeon or chicken that the falconers had brought with them. Performed in front

[81] Von Canstein to the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, undated (probably 19 September 1773), HStAM, 5, 12801, fol. 21–2.

[82] Until *c.*1600, herons were sometimes consumed at court, yet in this case, young, bred herons (*heronettes*) were preferred; see Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, pp. 67–8. In general, the flesh of herons and kites was considered dangerous for falcons and therefore 'substituted' with pigeon or chicken flesh during the *curée*.

[83] See Weber, 'Die Macht der Meuten', pp. 277–8.

of the watching members of the court, the feeding of the raptors symbolized the prince's role as the distributor of goods to his subjects, especially to loyal servants. Hence, d'Arcussia praised the young Louis XIII's ability to perform this bloody task with his own hands:

> I have seen our king at the age of fourteen doing the duties for his birds with an admirable ease, and dismembering a crow…to give *curée* to three falcons who had fought with it for a long time and had taken it down to earth. His Majesty, having it [the crow] in his hand, placed its heels on the wings of the crow, took the two limbs with his hands, and, tearing it, split it up into three equal parts for the three falcons, with which His Majesty [fed] his minions with his own hands, with admirable elegance.[84]

Although later sovereigns delegated the feeding of the raptors to their falconers rather than feeding them in person, it remained a constitutive element of a courtly falcon hunt. At this moment, the interspecies hunting community that had dispersed to various places on the ground and in the sky in order to perform a coordinated chase, finally reunited around the fallen prey and celebrated its success in a calm, well-ordered manner. After the excitement of the furious aerial battle, the civilizing aspects of court life took over again. Whereas the courtiers returned to their card plays or conversations, the falcons voluntarily accepted their hoods and were discreetly escorted to leave the scene towards the princely falconry, sitting side by side, tied to rectangular bars.

Yet, how successful were the courtly falcon hunts in practice? Although this is usually not documented in written sources, the hunting birds must have missed their targets quite often. According to modern studies, wild adult peregrine falcons' and gyrfalcons' attacks on prey birds are successful in about one out of ten cases, whereas trained falcons achieve 15 per cent successful attacks and 9 per cent direct kills on average.[85] There is some reason to assume that the overall success rate of trained birds of prey at early modern courts was higher than this. The chances for success certainly increased when the 'waiting' falcons could attack the flushed game animals from above and when there were no bushes or trees nearby preventing the latter from escaping (as they often would in natural conditions). Furthermore, the trained falcons sometimes attacked in teams, which also heightened the chances for success. However, we should also take into account

[84] D'Arcussia, 'Lettres de Philoierax à Philofalco ou sont contenus les maladies des oyseaux, & les remedes pour les guerir', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 120.

[85] See Dekker, 'Hunting Tactics of Peregrines', pp. 57–9, 135; Šegrt et al., 'A Comparison of Falconry and Hunting with Guns', note a rate of successful attacks of 15 per cent and a kill rate of 9 per cent for trained goshawks, in line with the numbers mentioned above. However, the success rates with well-trained peregrine falcons can be far better under optimal conditions (free sight, open terrain). I thank Karl-Heinz Gersmann for his comments on this and other points.

that captive falcons were arguably less fit than their wild cousins who could breathe better air and trained their flying apparatus all the time. Moreover, their attacking 'unnatural prey' such as large herons made success more risky and less probable. Overall, failed attacks and even fatal outcomes such as the death of King Frederick William favourite falcon in Potsdam must have been frequent.

Consequently, a typical imperial hunting morning or afternoon in Laxenburg with several dozens of trained raptors that were brought to the field often resulted in no more than two or three caught game animals. Compared to the dozens or even hundreds of pheasants and partridges that gun-loving sovereigns such as King Louis XIV of France used to shoot in a single day,[86] these numbers are more than moderate. Thus, falcon hunts were certainly not the hunting technique that brought most kills to the table. However, this did not have to be a disadvantage compared to other hunting techniques; on the contrary, the open end of falconry could even enhance its value as a courtly spectacle: the more uncertain the outcome, the more exciting a success.

In such a context, high-performing birds had the chance to become well-known animal stars that lived on in the courts' halls of fame. For several German hunting residences, portrait galleries with several dozens of individual falcon portraits can be reconstructed, providing details about the name, life span, and major achievements of the animals.[87] According to a bird portrait that hung in a hunting lodge of Clemens August of Bavaria, Elector of Cologne, the female gyrfalcon *Königin GeerFalck* ('Queen Gyrfalcon') had brought down no less than thirty herons in the year 1736.[88] The Icelandic male gyrfalcon *Landgraf* ('Landgrave'), one of the more than twenty falcons and hawks that were portrayed by Hesse-Kassel's court painter Christoph Wilhelm Grote (1719–1804), was a less fortunate hunter despite his association with the ruler by name (Figure 3.8). On 25 May 1764 in the afternoon, a year after his portrait had been painted in Kassel, this 'magnificent falcon' lost his life near Wabern, according to an added inscription on the painting. After his second course that day, he was struck dead by an 'old heron' who was afterwards marked with a brass ring.[89] As on the battlefields of the Seven Years War that had just ended, glory and fate were in close proximity in the aerial animal fights and commemorated in similar ways.[90]

[86] Salvadori, *La chasse*, pp. 201–3, 209.

[87] For Bavarian examples, see Hansmann, *Schloss Falkenlust*, pp. 21–3; Seidenader, *Kulturgeschichte der Falknerei*, vol. 3, pp. 1919–35; Simonsfeld, 'Eine bayerische Gemäldesammlung'. On the falcon portraits at the Ansbach Court, see Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, pp. 22–4, on Hesse-Kassel, Hewicker, 'Die Falkenporträts in Schloss Fasanerie'. The emperor's court painter Philipp Ferdinand de Hamilton also painted a large series of portraits of falcons and other birds of prey, but the collection is now scattered in various Austrian museums and private collections.

[88] Hansmann, *Schloss Falkenlust*, p. 21.

[89] Hewicker, 'Die Falkenporträts in Schloss Fasanerie', p. 58. In total, the portraits of twenty gyrfalcons, one peregrine falcon, one goshawk, and one sparrow hawk have been preserved.

[90] As art historians have argued, the Seven Years War initiated an episodic genre of visual representation in which also the heroic fates of individual soldiers and mid-range military leaders could become iconic; see Rees, '*Krieg und Querelle*'.

DIESER UNVERGLEICHLICHE ISLAN
DISCHE FALCKE, SEINES NAHMEN
DER LANDGRAF GENANT, HAT IM
JAHR MDCCLXIII &c. BEY ALHIESI
GER FALCONNEREY GEFLOGEN,
UND IST IN CASSEL GEMAHLT WORDEN

Figure 3.8 Christoph Wilhelm Grote, portrait of the falcon *Landgraf*, oil on canvas, 1763. The inscription on the left, in a gold frame with a red ribbon, recounting the circumstances of the falcon's dramatic death on 25 May 1764, was added posthumously to Landgraf's portrait that had been painted on the living model the previous year

Source: Museum Schloss Fasanerie, Fulda, inv. no. B 479/Kulturstiftung des Hauses Hessen.

In these cases, the trained falcons were clearly more than anonymous hunting instruments; they appeared as agents with individual names and life stories. Such representations raise the question to which extent agency was attributed to falcons by contemporary human observers—and what role it played in the falcons' last phase of life.

3.4 Leaving the Courtly Stage

The discussion whether animals are independent agents or not began long before the 'animal turn' in the Humanities and was especially vivid in the seventeenth century. This debate was closely related to the controversy about the cognitive and communicative capacities of animals. Whereas the assimilationist position of Renaissance authors like Michel de Montaigne considered the actions of animals that seemed to be based on decisions as proof for their capacity to reason, René Descartes and his disciples argued that even if an animal's behaviour seemed meaningful to human observers it could still be a purely mechanical response to external stimuli—like the movements of an automatic watch.[91]

Learned falconry authors like Charles d'Arcussia tended to argue in line with Montaigne's position, emphasizing the cognitive capacities of animals with whom they interacted daily in the field. Yet interestingly, when discussing the raptors' agency in his *Lettres de Philoierax à Philofalco*, d'Arcussia did not primarily refer to the birds' eagerness to learn their roles or their tactical manoeuvres during the chase.[92] Instead, he rather evoked examples about hunts that failed—at least from a human perspective. For instance, d'Arcussia recalled the 'action of one of my lanners' who refused to give away the partridge she had brought down to earth.[93] In lieu of serving her master, the bird took the prey with her claws, flew past the falconer, 'discharged it so cautiously that I was unable to determine [its whereabouts]', and then disappeared. When the narrator—'Philoierax' alias d'Arcussia—was finally able to detect his bird sitting in a tree some thousand steps away, the lanner did not return to the luring falconer, but again flew past him to the place where she had hidden the partridge. There, the falcon sat down to eat her prey with pleasure—'could a cunning man have more wiliness and finesse?'[94] After

[91] See Gontier, *De l'homme à l'animal*; Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*; and Wild, *Die anthropologische Differenz*, esp. chs 2 and 3.

[92] The 'Lettres de Philoierax à Philofalco ou sont contenus les maladies des oyseaux, & les remedes pour les guerir' were published as a 'sixth part' of the *Fauconnerie* that contains the 'Conférence des fauconniers' and d'Arcussia's 'last letters', published in Rouen in d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1644). Edited together with a foreword by the theologian 'I.D.P.', it is not entirely clear if d'Arcussia—who had died in 1628—wrote the letters himself. The fictional names of the title clearly refer to the practice of falconry: 'Philo[h]ierax' means 'lover of the hawks', while 'Philofalco' refers to falcons.

[93] D'Arcussia, 'Lettres de Philoierax à Philofalco', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), letter VIII: 'Comme les oyseaux ont l'usage de raison' pp. 128–31, here 128 ('action d'un mien Lanier').

[94] Ibid., p. 129.

recounting similar stories about falcons tricking him before finally returning to their benevolent master, the narrator concludes that birds—raptors as well as game birds—were definitely capable of learning, reasoning, and making autonomous decisions: 'They have the liberty to do or not to do, to invent remedies to meet their necessities; we observe these things daily.'[95]

The falcons' capacity to frustrate humans by crossing their plans was thus seen as a constitutive element of their agency even more than their cooperation. The unwillingness to share their prey with their human partners was only one among many ways through which falcons could manifest their self-will. Even under perfect hunting conditions, birds regularly decided to avoid dangerous attacks, take a bath instead of flying, land on a tree instead of aiming at the falconer's fist or lure, or fly away altogether and never return. However, for historians, detailed information about such manifestations of agency is difficult to find. For obvious reasons, the birds' misbehaviour was usually not documented in images or the semi-official hunting reports that appeared in local printed media after royal hunts. Moreover, no lists of the losses of birds during training or hunts have survived in the archives, even if it is possible that such documents once existed.[96]

Nevertheless, the falcon's escape was such a common event for early modern observers of falcon hunts that it served as a metaphor in contemporary literature: in Shakespeare's *Othello*, the main protagonist compares his supposedly disloyal wife Desdemona with a 'haggard' of whom the 'jesses were my dear heartstrings'. Seeing her flying 'down the wind', the unfortunate lover/falconer exclaims: 'She's gone, I am abused, and my relief/Must be to loathe her'.[97] Less poetic but no less revealing, printed instructions to the subjects about whom to inform when they spotted an escaped falcon of the princely falconry also testify to the fact that this scenario occurred regularly at early modern princely courts.[98] The animals' potential to defect made falcon hunts even more unpredictable but arguably also more interesting for the watching courtly public.

Regarding the birds' life courses, the possibility of escaping during a hunting flight shows once more that the integration into a human-dominated environment was not necessarily a one-way process. On the contrary, it is reasonable to assume that a considerable number of the birds who had been caught in the wild in order to serve as courtly hunting assistants ended up spending the last phase of their lives in the wild again. Scattered stories about recovered birds suggest that such birds could survive for years on their own. In 1755, a peregrine who bore a

[95] Ibid., p. 131.

[96] In France, some lists recording the death or insurance of individual hunting dogs including their names have been preserved; see Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, p. 625. In the correspondence of the Laxenburg falconry with the Vienna court, lists counting all falcons of the falconry are also mentioned regularly but do not seem to have been preserved.

[97] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* (*c.*1603, first printed in 1622), 3.3.265–73, quoted from Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*, pp. 113–38, here 120.

[98] Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, pp. 46–7.

ring with the acronym of the margrave of Ansbach as well as the date 1748 was caught in the Netherlands; the ring of another falcon who had been owned by the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel was even dated 1742, which indicates that the former courtly falcon had lived 15 years on her own.[99] In these cases, one can assume that the escaped birds had returned to their original habitats, from where they made their annual passages between northern and south-western Europe as they had done before first being captured. In a time when Rousseau formulated his proto-romantic vision of a 'return to Nature', some princely hunting assistants voluntarily left the most splendid stages of human civilization and returned to the habits of their wild parents.

Yet, for a larger part of the inhabitants of the courtly falconries, their return to nature had a less romantic background. Only raptors who were healthy and good performers or, like the white gyrfalcons, were especially valuable were kept beyond the hunting season, while other 'used' raptors including old red kites kept for training purposes were regularly excluded from the list of animals to be fed ('*aus dem Aas nehmen*').[100] There are several possibilities what this exclusion from the princely falconry might have meant for an individual bird, and there was arguably no general rule. Some older, less attractive birds may still have been valuable enough to be sold on the market, gifted to courtiers, or kept privately by the falconers. Other 'useless' falcons might even have been killed on the spot, as the French courtier and memoirist Duc de Luynes heard it said.[101]

However, in contrast to the great number of courtly horses that were sold to the butcher or the knacker after a life of service, or used to feed the prince's hunting dogs, a dead raptor was of so little use that formerly famous princely birds ending up on the dunghill even became a trope in literature.[102] Therefore and because of the growing awareness that the wild raptor populations had to be preserved in order to supply the falconries with sufficient new blood (in France their airies therefore stood under special protection of the *gardes des aires*), it is not unlikely that many of the old or 'unusable' raptors were also simply detached

[99] *Wienersches Diarium*, 28 June 1755, p. 4, dated from The Haye, 8 June 1755, and reporting that during the Prince Stadhouder's stay two falcons had been caught 'deren jeder einen Ring am Fuß gehabt, darauf folgende Buchstaben gestochen gewesen: (C.W.F.M.Z.B.O)/(NO.43.A.1748.U.G.)—(F.R.S.L.Q.H) / (Cassel 1742.)' The newspaper offers no decoding of the acronyms, but it is almost certain that the first must stand for Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Markgraf zu Brandenburg(-Ansbach) residing in Onolzbach, while Kassel was the residence city of landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, Frederick I, who was also King of Sweden since 1720. The age of the bird would be remarkable, but not impossible.

[100] See, e.g., the order of the secretary of the Imperial Falconry, Martschläger, to heron master Rabel, from Vienna, 31 October 1773, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 3, no. 47, to take all 'unfit' birds off the feeding list ('übrige untaugliche Vögel aus dem Aas nehmen').

[101] Luynes, *Mémoires*, vol. 9, p. 66 (Compiègne, 23 July 1748).

[102] See Van den Abeele, '"On the dunghill": On the afterlives of court horses, see Bayreuther, *Pferde und Fürsten*, pp. 253–74. According to Nowosatko, *Scharfrichter und Abdecker*, pp. 131–6, Bavarian knackers were obliged to breed and feed hunting dogs for the elector.

from their leashes, hoods, and rings, and then released.[103] This possibility underlines once again that for many early modern falcons, service at court must have been only a temporary activity, surrounded by more or less long periods of living away from the ambivalences of human care and control.

The open end to the existences of the rulers' raptors fits into a life course characterized by numerous metamorphoses. As we have seen, all the falcons that hunted for the princes were captured in the wild, transported over long distances as bound, blind goods of diplomatic or commercial exchange, then gradually integrated into the multispecies environment of the court and trained for a specific role in the public court hunts. Although extremely privileged by contemporary standards of equipment, food, and care, the presence of most of the falcons at court was only short. As a result, hundreds of 'fresh' falcons were brought to the European royal courts each year via numerous routes. The fundamental asymmetry in their relationship with humans was only briefly reversed at the moment of flight, when the lure of the falconer became one option among others.

Given the high costs and representational risks associated with falconry, the question of why this complex apparatus of animal acquisition, care, taming, and training was created and maintained. To answer this question, we need to look more closely at the changing symbolism of falconry, the interests of the various human agents involved, and the role it played in the development of princely courts in Baroque Europe.

Rulers and Raptors: Falcons in Courtly Europe, 1600–1793. Nadir Weber, Oxford University Press.
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[103] In some regions of Central Asia, such as the Altai, birds of prey are still released after some time; see Soma, *Human and Raptor Interactions*. This practice was probably also common in pre-modern falconry, although explicit sources are rare. I am indebted to Baudouin Van den Abeele for pointing this out.

PART II
FLYING COURTS

4
Courtly Falconers

On 17 January 1624, the news gatherer John Chamberlain reported from London that a 'French Baron, a good falconer' had brought '16 cast of hawks from the French King, with horses and setting dogs' to King James I. Subsequently, Jacques de Bonnevau made a 'splendid entry with his train by torch-light, and will stay till he has instructed some of our people in his kind of falconry'.[1] The King of England, Scotland, and Ireland, at the ripe age of 58, was so delighted that 'against the advice of his physicians' he went to Newmarket to see the new birds fly. Two weeks later, the king ordered that the 'noble falconers' from France should receive 'his picture and the case garnished with diamonds, with a chain set in diamonds' worth about £800 to £1000 as a parting gift.[2] Shortly afterwards, James I wished to expand his falconry corps by adding two new flights for crow and magpie to the existing parties for heron, river, and partridge. Twenty-four falconers and thirty casts of raptors under the command of the 'master falconer', Sir Anthony Pell, were henceforth permanently at the king's disposal.[3]

The episode of the French falconers' mission to England—at a time when France became increasingly involved in the events of the Thirty Years War and sought support against the Spanish—is revealing for different aspects of the second part of this book. It points to gestures of diplomatic friendship and courtly sociability but also to the implicit competition in royal magnificence that surrounded the art of hunting with birds. Moreover, it reveals that the size and composition of the royal falconries varied in time and space, and was closely intertwined with the changing moods of monarchs and with the international system. This chapter will focus on the roles of professional falconers at court and in court society. First, I will show that the figure of the falconer became increasingly 'curialized' at the beginning of the seventeenth century and that this

[1] John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton (in The Hague), London, 17 January 1624, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, James I, vol. 4 (1623–5), CLVIII, no. 33, p. 149, consulted on BHO. The shipment was arguably a counter-gift for the 'four castes of hawkes' that James I had sent to Louis XIII in January 1620 through his Master Falconer Sir Anthony Pell; see TNA, AO 1/9/9, and E 351/45.

[2] Secretary Convay to the Lord of Treasury Middlesex, Newmarket, 30 January 1724, ibid., no. 69, p. 156. The identification of the Bonnevau's name is based in the information in *Samuel Gedge Ldt., Summer List: Books, Manuscripts, & Ephemera* (Hanworth, 2020), p. 9, showing an original receipt for 3,600 French livres as a compensation for the costs of his mission, dated May 1624.

[3] Ibid., CLXI, no. 67, p. 204 (undated account, *c.* March 1624), and CLXIX, no. 17, p. 293 (Lord Brooke to Secretary Conway, 3 July 1624), BHO. A cast was made of two or more falcons that were trained to fly together. For the context, see MacGregor, 'Animals and the Early Stuarts', esp. pp. 312–13; MacGregor, 'The Household out of Doors'.

shift changed the concept and practice of falconry itself. Then we will see that the falconers' profession could offer extraordinary career perspectives at court, as the case of the royal falconer and favourite De Luynes illustrates. Finally, this chapter will trace the courtly falconers' status and activities at Europe's major courts in a long-term perspective and show that their lives, too, were marked by a growing significance of pan-European communication and exchange.

4.1 D'Arcussia and the Reinvention of Falconry

The first chapters of this book have shown that the established view of a general decline of falconry in the early modern period is misleading as far as princely courts are concerned. Yet, what about the general significance of hunting with trained birds in the early modern elite at large? In this section, we will see that the decline hypothesis has more plausibility for the European landed gentry and patrician households. However, even in these strata of society, there was no steady trend of decline from the early sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. On the contrary, I will argue that falconry reached its apogee as a wider social and cultural phenomenon in the period from *c.*1590 to 1620 before being widely monopolized by princely courts for the rest of the early modern age. This shift is linked to the emergence of more effective hunting guns, but it is also deeply intertwined with the general process of state formation and the rise of the European court society.

A strong indicator for the general cultural significance of falconry in the decades around 1600 is the flourishing of printed falconry literature in this period.[4] In France, several falconry treatises had already been printed before 1580, but most of them were based on late medieval manuscripts such as Jean de Franchières' *Livre de la Faulconnerie*, written between 1458 and 1469 and printed for the first time in 1532. From the 1580s onwards, there was a veritable wave of new falconry treatises that became bestsellers on the book market. Whereas the humanist Jacques Auguste du Thou's *Hieracasophion*, written in Latin verses and subsequently printed in Bordeaux (1582), Paris (1584, 1587), Lyon (1596), Augsburg (1596), Frankfurt (1607), and again in Paris (1612), presented a highly learned and literary vision of the art of falconry,[5] most other treatises were rather based on practical experience. In 1594, Pierre de Gommer and his brother François published a treatise on hawking (*autourserie*) in Châlons, which was later reprinted in Paris.[6] Four years later, in 1598, the first edition of the *Fauconnerie* by Charles d'Arcussia was published in Aix-en-Provence. This *opus*

[4] See Salvadori, *La chasse*, pp. 37–66, esp. p. 40; De Smet, *La fauconnerie*, pp. 119–59. For an overview on early modern falconry and hunting literature, see Lindner, *Bibliographie*.
[5] De Smet, *La fauconnerie*, pp. 187–209.
[6] Gommer/Gommer, *De L'autourserie* (new editions 1605, 1608).

magnum of falconry literature, which will be discussed in more detail in this section, saw no less than eight expanded editions in French until 1653.[7] From a technical and literary point of view, the subsequent treatises of François Saint-Aulaire (published in 1619) and Pierre Harmont (1620, reprinted in 1634), the posthumous edition of Jacques de Léon's falconry treatise by his great-grandson Gaspard (1643), and the hawking treatise of the Sieur De la Salmondière Moynet (1647) were not comparable with d'Arcussia's works. Nevertheless, they also testify to the ongoing popularity of the genre in France until the 1640s.[8] After 1650, however, the flow of re-editions ran dry and only one new major falconry treatise—*Le véritable fauconnier* by Claude de Morais (1683)—was published in French.[9] The printed discourse on the art of falconry broke off after its heyday in the first decades of the seventeenth century.

Similar trends can be observed in other European countries, but with less intensity. The most important English falconry treatises—George Turberville's *Booke on Falconry and Hawking* (first published in 1576, reprinted in 1611), Edmund Bert's *Treatise of Hawks and Hawking* (1619), and Symon Latham's *Falconry* (1615, 1633)—fall into the same period, followed by a decline of the genre in the second half of the seventeenth century.[10] In other language regions, the ups and downs of falconry literature were less striking. Federico Giorgi's *Libro del modo di conoscere buoni Falconi, Astori e Sparavieri* (1547) figures among the most important falconry treatises of the sixteenth century, but with the waning of the Renaissance, the Italian influence on the European printed discourse of falconry faded.[11] For the Iberian Peninsula, the same can be observed. After the *Libro de cetrería de caça de açor* by Fadrique de Zúñiga y Sotomayor, which was printed posthumously in 1565 in Salamanca, the book *Arte de la caça da altaneria* by Diogo Fernandes Ferreira, published in Lisbon in 1616, was probably the most prominent contribution to the general discourse from this region.[12] Despite the preeminent expertise of Dutch and Flemish falconers and the omnipresence of falconry motives in paintings of artists from this region, no significant

[7] 1598, 1599, 1605, 1607, 1608, 1615, 1618, 1621, 1627, 1643, 1644, and 1653, according to various catalogues.

[8] Saint-Aulaire, *La Fauconnerie* (1620); Harmont dit Mercure, *Le Miroir de la fauconnerie* (1620, 1634); Léon, *La Fauconnerie* (1643); De la Salmondiere Moynet, *Nouvelle methode et brefve instruction de l'autourcerie* (1647).

[9] Morais, *Le véritable Fauconnier* (1683).

[10] See Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*, analysing both falconry treatises and literary references. On the social significance of falconry in early seventeenth-century England, see also Grassby, 'The Decline of Falconry in Early Modern England', pp. 39–46.

[11] On falconry in the Italian Renaissance, see Malacarne, *Lords of the Sky*.

[12] Fernandes Ferreira, *Arte de la caça da altaneria* ([1616], 1899 edn); see Fredejas Rueda, *Bibliotheca cinegetica hispanica*, pp. 45–46, and Fredejas Rueda, *Suplemento. 1*, pp. 16–17, on the *Libro de cetrería de caza de azor*, pp. 93–4. However, several seventeenth-century manuscript copies of earlier works testify to the ongoing interest in falconry; see ibid., pp. 91–2.

falconry treatises were printed in Dutch in the decades around 1600.[13] In the German-language region, the printed vernacular discourse on falconry was not particularly vibrant in the first decades of the seventeenth century, too. Voluminous hunting treatises including chapters on falconry would only be printed between 1710 and 1760, together with the first vernacular translation of Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen's *De arte venandi cum avibus*.[14] In the time before, a translation of d'Arcussia's *Fauconnerie*, printed in Frankfurt in 1617, had been the most prominent text on falconry available to the German-speaking public.[15]

Overall, France was the country where the falconry discourse was most vibrant in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. From there, new visions of the hunt with birds spread out to other countries. This conjuncture points to the ongoing or even increasing popularity of falconry within the social elites especially in France and England, but it also reflects the general transformation of both the representation and the practice of falconry at this time. This transformation was connected to the rise of a new, more spectacular Baroque art of hunting with birds that was widely monopolized by Europe's major princely courts and contributed to the fact that falconry finally lost its appeal as a sport for the wider social elites.

The popular falconry treatises by the Provençal nobleman Charles d'Arcussia de Capre, Seigneur d'Esparron (1554–1628), exemplify this transformation of falconry from a noble sport to a courtly art in the first decades of the seventeenth century.[16] In the 1560s, the first decade of the French Wars of Religion, d'Arcussia had spent part of his youth at the court of the governor of the Provence, Claude de Savoie, comte de Tende. He then went to Italy, where he encountered new methods of falconry. After his return to his family's territories and his promotion to the new title of *vicomte* d'Esparron in 1584, he supported the king's party against the rise of the League in 1591 and became *premier consul* of the town of Aix in 1596. He also printed the first edition of his *Fauconnerie* in this town in 1598, of which only few copies have survived. The second edition, printed in Paris in the following year, reached a much wider readership—and one that was closer to the court of the '*magnanime Henry IIII, Très-Chrestien Roy the France, & de*

[13] According to the bibliography of Lindner, *Bibliographie*, pp. 794–838, there are numerous Latin dissertations on hunting law but no relevant falconry literature in Dutch before the nineteenth century. A seventeenth-century exception has been analysed by Braekman, 'Uniek nederlands traktaat'.

[14] On the Ansbach context of this edition, which also included a history of falconry and a practical manual, see Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*. The voluminous hunting treatises by Schröder (Hellwig), *Neue Lustige und vollständige Jagd-Kunst* (1717), and Fleming, *Der Vollkommene Teutsche Jäger* (1719) both include chapters on falconry.

[15] D'Arcussia, *Falconaria* (1617); see also Lindner, *Bibliographie*, pp. 35–6. A short, late sixteenth-century German manuscript on falconry is edited and analysed in Giese, '"Falkhen zu fahen"'.

[16] On Charles d'Arcussia's life, see esp. Jullien, 'Charles d'Arcussia et ses œuvres', and Roux, *Un gentilhomme campagnard*. I am indebted to Christine Martinez Augias, who is researching the biography of Charles d'Arcussia and who has shared with me some interesting archival material.

Navarre', to whom the book was dedicated.[17] Yet, despite d'Arcussia's rising fame as a 'great prophet of the jargon of birds',[18] which brought him the honorary title of a *gentilhomme de la fauconnerie du Roi*, he continued to fashion himself as the exact opposite of an ambitious courtier—a figure that had been largely discredited in the late Valois times.[19] Until his death in 1628, Charles d'Arcussia spent a relatively modest countryside life in his château d'Esparron and aimed to be remembered as a brave and devout knight (Figure 4.1).

In line with this self-representation as a simple but well-born Provençal nobleman, d'Arcussia presented falconry as a gentleman's exercise advantageous to the

NON ENIM IN ARCV MEO SPERABO ET GLADIVS MEVS NON SALVABIT ME Psalmo. 43.
ESPARRON braue Cauahier
D'vn Stile docte et singulier
A si bien la chasse descrite
Qu'il n'est faucon, sacre ou gyrfaut
Qui iamais puisse aller si haut
Que la gloire de son merite

Figure 4.1 Charles d'Arcussia d'Esparron, etching by Isaac (?) Briot, 1620s. This contemporary portrait shows d'Arcussia in a courtly gown, probably of silk. The accompanying caption praises the vicomte as a 'brave cavalier' whose fame as an author of hunting treatises flew higher than any 'falcon, saker, or gyrfalcon'
Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, inv. no. D 136606.

[17] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1598), cover page and pp. 3–4; see also Roux, *Un gentilhomme campagnard*, p. 12.
[18] Thus reads the eulogy in verse 'sur la Fauconnerie de Monsieur d'Esparron' in d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), written by d'Arcussia's fellow countryman Louis de Galaup de Chasteuil (1554–1598), that served as a foreword to the subsequent editions.
[19] Le Roux, *La faveur du roi*, esp. pp. 228–37.

health of body and mind. In the third part of his *Fauconnerie*, he addressed his readers in numbered letters on different aspects of the practice of falconry.[20] Right at the beginning, he made clear that the art of falconry was nothing for non-noble *roturiers*. D'Arcussia warned his readers that hunting with trained raptors was not a means for bringing meat on the table at a better price than that of the market because the purchase and care of birds was so expensive. Moreover, a falconer needed sufficient leisure time and access to a ground that was populated with partridges or other game animals. If your wife also agreed to the associated expenses, d'Arcussia continued in a somewhat ironic tone, you could begin to practice an art 'that is not only beautiful, but also honourable'.[21] In daily life, the noble practitioner of falconry was assisted by a professional falconer at his service who looked after the birds; d'Arcussia himself refers to 'my falconer' several times in his treatise when discussing his own hunting trips.[22] However, these tasks could only be delegated to selected people who distinguished themselves by a pleasant voice and smell as well as an overall gentle behaviour. These were necessary preconditions to keep the delicate raptors in good mood. Accordingly,

> valets and mercenary people, if there is no residue of nobility within them … can only be ignorant in our art, which cannot enter the head of a villain or that of a man of low birth, because of the natural instinct that guides people to hereditary actions, which pass from father to son.[23]

If the art of hunting with birds required noble birth and habitus, it is not surprising that conversely it also served as an element of social self-fashioning—not least for those whose status as noblemen was contested. In the time d'Arcussia wrote these lines, hooded falcons were still a popular accessory on painted portraits of courtiers, ministers, and urban patricians.[24] Many of the portrayed persons might never have had a real raptor on their fist, but written sources indicate that in the early seventeenth century, falconry was probably more broadly practised among the elites than ever before.

Especially letters that were exchanged among noblemen in France or England testify to the frequent use of falcons and hawks for supplying their or their friends' kitchens with feathered game and hares.[25] For this purpose, the gentlemen also

[20] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 122–230, 'Troisième partie … contenant en XLVII. Epistres, plusieurs belles & necessaires Instructions, Advis, & Receptes pour les oyseaux de la Fauconnerie, & maladies d'iceux'.

[21] Ibid., pp. 122–3.

[22] See, for instance, d'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 129.

[23] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), p. 189.

[24] See Chamerlat, *La fauconnerie et l'art*, pp. 104–35; Huyskens, *De vrije vogelflugt*, pp. 46–64; Hadjinicolaou, '"Ich zog mir einen Falken"', pp. 176–81; Ahrland, 'Hawks and Falconry'.

[25] For France, see the examples quoted in De Smet, *La fauconnerie*, pp. 33–83, esp. 69, for England; see also Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*, pp. 181ff., on falconry in late medieval letters, and Van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie dans les lettres françaises*.

sent their trained raptors to other places and let their falconers, friends, or clients go to the fields, always concerned about their birds' health and performance. 'I would have sent you pheasants', the naval commander and Member of Parliament Carew Raleigh wrote to the Secretary of State Sir Robert Cecil (1563–1612) in January 1601, 'but the hawk you gave me is not as yet cunning.' Some days later, Edward Sulyard sent 'a few partridges and a pheasant of my hawk's killing' to Raleigh, hoping that 'through the goodness of your Irish tassel' he could send him even more of them soon.[26] In another letter, Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, informed Cecil in detail about the qualities of 'your famous lanner' whose 'feathers are yet scant hard in the quills by reason of her late mewing, and it must stand for part of an excuse that she flieth not in so good a place this year as she did last'.[27] In France, some high-ranking noblemen and courtiers such as the constable Henri I, duc de Montmorency (1534–1614), occasionally dared to invite the king himself to practise falconry on their lands. A personal thank-you letter written by King Henri IV, the last French king who presented himself as first gentleman of the kingdom (*premier gentilhomme du royaume*), shows that such noble invitations to falconry parties were valued even at the very top of the social hierarchy.[28]

Observing such interactions, d'Arcussia assumed that falconry had become so fashionable among the country's wider elites in the 1600s because of hopes in social advancement in a developing court society:

> It is true that [falconry] has a degree of reputation that all sorts of elevated people—be it ecclesiastics, lawyers, or others who own lands where they can practice—have birds, at least goshawks. And if they could all find servants able to care for the birds of lure [i.e. falcons], they would all have some, because everyone tries to conform himself to the inclinations of the king.[29]

Notwithstanding this critical tone, d'Arcussia himself was among those who shaped the image of the present king, Louis XIII, as a virtuosic falconer who

[26] Carew Ralegh (Raleigh) to Sir Robert Cecil, Downton, 20 January 1600 (i.e., 10 January 1601), and Edward Suliard (Sulyard) to Robert Cecil, Flemings, 31 January 1600 (1601), *Cecil Papers*, vol. 11, BHO. It is not impossible that there is a hidden meaning in these seemingly innocuous messages only weeks before the rivalry between Cecil and Robert Devereux (1565–1601), second Earl of Essex, would have fatal consequences. In any case, the vocabulary shows that the letter writers were experienced falconers.

[27] Gilbert Talbot, 7th Earl of Shrewsbury (1552–1616) to Sir Robert Cecil, Worksop, 8 September 1602, *Cecil Papers*, vol. 12, BHO. In this case, in cannot be excluded that 'lanner' served as a codename for a mistress. Talbot continued to suggest that Cecil should 'see her fly as privately as you can'. Coding letters to cover intrigues or sexual affairs was a widespread phenomenon among seventeenth-century courtly noblemen. On the language and codes in the nobility's letters, see Kühner, *Politische Freundschaft bei Hofe*, pp. 179–222.

[28] De Smet, *La fauconnerie à la Renaissance*, p. 58, quoting Henri's letter to Montmorency from 19 March 1607.

[29] D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 15.

made this practice so attractive to ambitious noblemen. From the 1615 edition of the *Fauconnerie* onwards, falconry practised at the royal court starts to play an ever greater role in the Provençal nobleman's writings. In his foreword to the 1615 edition, dated Paris, 15 November 1614, d'Arcussia addressed Louis XIII directly. It is even probable that d'Arcussia personally handed over a copy of his work to the young falconer-king: as a deputy of Aix, d'Arcussia spent several months in Paris, where the *Etats généraux* were held from October 1614 to February 1615, and took advantage of his journey to see the royal falcons fly. In a new chapter written for this edition, d'Arcussia referred to the flights on crow that were now frequently practised at the king's court.[30] In his subsequent writings, *La Fauconnerie du Roy* ('The king's falconry') and *La conférence des fauconniers* ('The conference of the falconers'), both written between 1615 and 1617 and combined with the *Fauconnerie* in later editions,[31] the royal falconry at Louis XIII's court finally became the primary point of reference for the widely read author.

In his account of the king's falconry, later published with the addition 'as it was in 1615',[32] d'Arcussia referred to his own observations as an eyewitness of the royal flights. As we have seen above, he gave detailed descriptions of the spectacular flights of the king's white gyrfalcons, and wrote of the rich and varied bird collection.[33] At the same time, d'Arcussia also drew the attention of his readers to the king's falconers and the organization of the royal falconry. The account gives names and details of the falconers who served the king in 1615. It begins with the team of the *oiseaux du Cabinet du roi* under the direction of the 'sieur de Luyne', whom we will become acquainted with in the next section of this chapter. Then it describes the *vols* on heron, crow, kite, fields, and river, and their masters who served under the command of the *grand fauconnier*, André de Vivonne, baron de Chataigneraie (d. 1616). Finally, the description ends with the additional flights that belonged to the king's wardrobe and chamber.[34]

The sheer number of the listed falconers, birds, and dogs was impressive enough. However, according to d'Arcussia, it was the falconers' expertise and the ritualized order in which they performed during the king's hunts in particular that made the royal falconry an incomparable public spectacle:

> I also say that never a king had people more skilled at flying than today, and that from the first flight to the last, all is in order. It is a beautiful sight: all these chiefs

[30] D'Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1615), pp. 277–8, and on the context, Weber, 'Liminal Moments', pp. 45–7.

[31] The first edition that included the two texts (united under a separate new cover page) is the *Fauconnerie* of 1617, printed by Iean Houzé in Paris, while another chapter, the 'Discours de chasse', was added in the 1619 edition.

[32] See Arcussia, *La Fauconnerie* (1627), table of contents. The text itself has another title page entitled 'La Fauconnerie du Roy. Avec la Conférence des Fauconniers' and is dated 1626.

[33] See above, Chapter 3.3, p. 109, and on the composition of the royal falconry, Chapter 2.1., pp. 64–5.

[34] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy, et des vols que Sa Majesté a invitez', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 165.

> of flights followed by hundred or a hundred and twenty falconers bearing the birds, all vested with the king's livery.[35]

Consequently, in the *Conférence des fauconniers*, the falconer 'E.' (alias Charles d'Arcussia, vicomte d'Esparron) has a clear answer to the question whether 'ancient' or 'modern' falconry is superior. He states that 'one has to confess that falconry was never as well-known as since the reign of Henri the Great and that Louis XIII will bring it to its perfection, because he is already superior in this discipline to everyone from the past.'[36]

According to d'Arcussia, the performance of earlier distinguished falconers such as Duc de Guise, Henri I de Lorraine (1550–1588), the above-mentioned constable of France, Henri I, duc de Montmorency, and the late governor of Provence, Henri d'Angouleme (1551–1586), was by no means comparable to those of the present king of France, whose birds had taken forty-seven partridges in a single winter day in the Craux d'Arles in Provence.[37] Moreover, he added a long list of falconry 'inventions' by the king himself, consisting in flights on unusual game animals with variable combinations of trained raptors including small kestrels and even shrikes.[38] D'Arcussia claimed that in ancient books, also those written in Greek, Latin, and Arabic, he had found nothing comparable to the present state of the art at the French royal court, where all sorts of trained birds—including cormorants—were used to hunt in an impressively well-ordered manner.[39] Even the contemporary Flemish and Dutch falconers could not compete with the king's falconers, being limited to the use of certain birds (i.e. peregrine falcons) and unable to hunt with them throughout the year. Thus, for d'Arcussia, the art of falconry had reached its historical apogee in early seventeenth-century France.

Similar to the praise of the 'modern' against the 'ancient' by the Sun King's academics at the end of the seventeenth century, Charles d'Arcussia's eulogy of the present not only had a national but also a socio-political component. While the old bearded author still liked to fashion himself as a country gentleman far from court life, he also acknowledged that the monarchy had outrun all princes and *grands seigneurs* in the kingdom—rivals in rank and patronage not only in the field of falconry. According to E. in the 'Conference of the falconers', his depiction of present times as a new heyday of the art of falconry is only true for the falconers 'who have the charge of the king's birds'. In contrast, the French lords who invested large sums to buy raptors in order to imitate the king lacked the experts

[35] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de le fauconnerie du Roy', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 166.
[36] D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 15. The chapter is entitled 'Septième iournée, où il se traite de plusieurs Fauconniers, anciens et modernes', ibid., pp. 14–17.
[37] Ibid., p. 17.
[38] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), pp. 163–4.
[39] D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 16. On cormorant fishing at Fontainebleau, see Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, pp. 305–6.

to train them in the same way and keep them in good health.[40] For the author, imitating or even trying to surpass the king in the field of falconry was therefore a fruitless endeavour:

> Do not think to imitate him in his strange flights.
> For everyone besides the king this is a vain desire.
> Because these are not birds, no, no, these are angels
> Who descend from Heaven in order to please him.[41]

In a time of continuous troubles with Huguenots, *états*, and *princes* as well as with foreign powers, it does not come as a surprise that the *gentilhomme de la Chambre du Roy* d'Arcussia proposed that French noblemen should better serve the king as he did with his humble treatise or as the falconers in the king's service did. In his later writings, he repeatedly mentioned that birds tend to fly in the direction of the sun, a metaphorical reference to the royal propaganda that celebrated Louis XIII as a sun-like, absolute sovereign: 'Like the angels of God look face-to-face at their creator, the birds direct their eye to the sun and profess that they consider it as their benefactor.'[42] At the end of his life, the Provençal nobleman, humanist, and falconer had turned into a loyal supporter of the first French Baroque king's glory and proclaimer of the golden age of courtly falconry.

4.2 The High Flight of the Sieur de Luynes

In Louis XIII's monarchy, falconers not only participated in the symbolic conquest of the kingdom, but were also deeply engaged in high court politics. Already by the end of the year 1611, it had become gradually clear to the courtiers frequenting the Louvre that the king of France had a new favourite. 'Ho! How beautiful it is, how beautiful it is, the lure, the lure—*Loïnes, Loïnes*', shouted the ten-year-old Louis XIII when he woke up on 28 November. 'This was a gentleman in charge of his merlins', the king's physician, Jean Héroard (1551–1628), added laconically to the entry in his diary.[43] In the years that followed, this gentleman, Charles d'Albert, *sieur* and later *duc* de Luynes (1578–1621), made an astonishing career that turned a member of the lesser nobility into a duke, pair, and constable of France—the king's principal favourite in the years before the rise of

[40] D'Arcussia, 'La conférence des fauconniers', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 17.
[41] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 173.
[42] D'Arcussia, 'Lettres de Philoierax à Philofalco', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 129. On the motif of the sun in royal propaganda well before Louis XIV, see Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, pp. 180–1, 187.
[43] Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 2, p. 1975, 28 November 1611.

CHARLES, MARQVIS D'ALBERT.
Duc de Luines, Pair Connestable, et Grand Faulconnier
de France Gouuerneur et Lieutenant General pour le Roy Picardie.
Moncornet excu.

Figure 4.2 Charles Marquis d'Albert, duc de Luynes, etching by Balthasar Moncornet, *c.*1621. In this portrait, De Luynes is represented as a military leader and member of the high nobility, while his activities as a courtly falconer, to which he owed his rise, are only briefly mentioned, with the title of *grand fauconnier*, among other functions
Source: The Trustees of the British Museum, no. 264739001.

Armand-Jean du Plessis, the future duke and cardinal of Richelieu (Figure 4.2).[44] By comparing this case with the career of another royal favourite, Thomas Monson, this section will analyse how the role of royal falconer could serve as a springboard for stellar careers in the early seventeenth century.

Charles d'Albert de Luynes was born as a son of the military officer and governor of the small fortress town Pont-Saint-Esprit, Honoré d'Albert, seigneur de Luynes (d. 1592). His father had already participated in the patronage network of the Valois, yet in 1584, after the death of his principal patron, the duc d'Anjou, had been disgraced at court. In order to re-establish the family's bonds to the centre of power, Charles entered the new King Henri IV's service as a page of the Royal Stables in 1591, where he remained a page until the age of 21. This service enabled him to learn in more depth the art of riding and the courtly language and

[44] See the brilliant biography by Kettering, *Power and Reputation*.

etiquette. After having served for seven years as *gentilhomme* in the household of a noble patron, he re-entered the service of King Henri IV as a *gentilhomme de la fauconnerie* in 1606.[45] As one of ninety-seven courtly falconers who trained birds and followed the royal hunts, Luynes was still far from being predestined to enter into a close relationship with the king. Even though he could have met the young dauphin Louis (born in 1601) already before the death of Henri IV on 14 May 1610, he certainly did not play any prominent role before 1611, when he appears in Héroard's diary for the first time.

The daily notes of the king's physician show that already from a very young age onwards, Louis had been a lover of exotic and domestic birds, and had come in direct contact with falcons by 1607 at the latest.[46] He also held a small personal collection of living birds that included songbirds as well as small raptors, especially merlin falcons that were popular beginner birds for princely children who learned the art of falconry. According to the memoirs of François Duval, marquis de Fontenay-Mareuil (*c.*1595–1665), people at court were already well aware that the responsibility of keeping these birds 'was a good means for winning the favour of the king'.[47] Only after two competing intrigues had paralysed each other, the thirty-three-year-old sieur de Luynes—whose intellectual qualities seemed modest enough to represent no major danger for those in power—was named 'master of the birds of the king's cabinet' (*maître des oiseaux du Cabinet du roi*). This nomination was not only the decisive moment in Luynes' career on which all subsequent steps would build. From an institutional perspective, it also marks the birth of the king's cabinet falconry that was independent from the *Grande Fauconnerie* and would exist until 1792. Only a combination of the young king's growing sympathy for his older, probably father-like servant and the constellation of power during his minority can explain why the cabinet falconry expanded so rapidly in the years that followed.

At the beginning of his relationship with Louis XIII, however, the most decisive factor was Luynes' remarkable talent in training merlin falcons, kestrels, sparrow hawks, and even small shrikes for various sorts of hunting flights on pigeons, kinglets, sparrows, and other small birds. According to Héroard, these chases took place in the gardens and sometimes even in the halls and galleries of the royal residence in Paris.[48] Luynes' skills in training small birds of prey seem to have impressed Louis to such an extent that Héroard once heard him speak 'of a shrike he had, and he said that he wanted to train it to fly on a sparrow, and a sparrow to fly on the kinglet, and a kinglet on flies'.[49] The teenager-king, who was kept away from council meetings and could not leave the capital on his own, spent more and more time in his *cabinet des oiseaux* that also became populated

[45] Ibid., pp. 25–31. [46] Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 1, p. 1152, 13 January 1607.
[47] Fontenay-Mareuil, *Mémoires*, pp. 43–4. [48] See Weber, 'Liminal Moments', pp. 45–7.
[49] Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 2, p. 1955, 23 September 1611.

with larger falcons such as gyrfalcons and lanners from Russia and Tunis.[50] By the end of the year 1614, Luynes went out for falconry hunts with the king three times per week, and his special place in Louis' life was so evident that Héroard repeatedly noted that Luynes was a gentleman who was most 'loved' by the king.[51]

Based on his bird expertise and the personal relationship with the king, Luynes soon received additional offices in the other branches of the royal falconry and used his position to bring his two brothers and friends to the court. In 1615, he was not only responsible for the *fauconnerie du Cabinet du roi* but was also assigned the prestigious task of the flight on kite in the *Grande Fauconnerie*, assisted by his younger brother, Honoré d'Albert, sieur de Cadenet (1581–1649). Moreover, Luynes was responsible for new hunting equipment for crow and field birds and the flight of the merlin falcons, which enabled him to bring dozens of clients to the court.[52] Among them, the nobleman Jérôme du Buisson (d. 1622), who had already served as a falconer under Henri IV, and his son Alexandre du Buisson called 'Buissonet' (1597–1658), who were responsible for the crow and merlin flights in the cabinet falconry, played an important role.[53] In October 1616, Luynes was also awarded the much more prestigious court office of *grand fauconnier*. This not only made him the undisputed head of falconry at the French court, but also gave him the right to accompany the young king at more or less any time.

Simultaneously, the cabinet falconry and parts of the *Grande Fauconnerie* merged into a power network whose ambitions went far beyond the staging of perfect hunting flights on herons and kites. Many of the falconers who surrounded the young king were former soldiers or members of the sword nobility. In early 1617, they formed the core of the intrigue that would culminate in a spectacular *coup de majesté*—the murder of the Queen Mother's main advisor and favourite, the Florentine Concino Concini, marquis d'Ancre (1569–1617). This coup was led by a captain of the royal bodyguards, Nicolas de l'Hôpital, marquis de Vitry, on the morning of Monday, 24 April 1617.[54] While the unsuspecting Concini was shot by several guards in the courtyard of the Louvre and his corpse was subsequently hanged, disfigured, and burnt, the Queen Mother, Maria de' Medici, was forced to go into exile and the king's council was restructured in the following days. It is probably no coincidence that this 'liberation' of the young king was celebrated with a symbolical act that involved birds: immediately after the death of Concini, the young king ordered the release of captive birds from their cages in the gardens of his residence. Soon after, the killing of Concini was justified and Louis XIII's personal reign announced in printed declarations.

[50] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 164.
[51] See Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 2, entries of 16 November 1614 and 3 January 1615.
[52] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy', *La Fauconnerie* (1644), p. 165.
[53] See Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, pp. 207–8.
[54] See Kettering, *Power and Reputation*, pp. 63–88.

With his participation in this successful conspiracy, Luynes definitively stepped out of the restricted area of falconry and entered the central stage of court politics. In the years that followed, Louis XIII lavished favours on his fatherly friend. Almost immediately, Luynes received a major part of Concini's confiscated fortune, including the title and lands of the marquisat d'Ancre. In 1619, he also became a hereditary duke and *pair de France*, and was nominated *premier gentilhomme de la chambre*. Furthermore, Luynes now acted as primary political advisor to Louis XIII, regularly joining the meetings of the *conseil du roi*. In 1621, he was even put in charge of the king's armies as *connétable de France* although he lacked military experience, which scandalized the sword nobility. In the same year, he also assumed the office of keeper of the seals, which allowed him to preside over meetings of the king's council when the chancellor was absent. In short: until his sudden death on 15 December 1621 in Longueville, caused by scarlet fever, the former page and falconer had reached the very top of France's social and political system. In the years before the rise of Richelieu, he served as a prime example for a royal favourite (*favori*) and finally also for that of a favourite-minister.

What role did falconry play in Luynes' career? The courtly figures of the favourite, *mignon*, or mistress (if it was a woman) were primarily based on a personal relationship of trust to the ruler, which could be founded on various grounds: a boyhood friendship, a tutor–pupil relationship, the practice of confession, or a sexual relationship.[55] Thus, Luynes' personal qualities were certainly more important than his expertise in training birds when becoming the king's intimate. Nevertheless, it can be argued that a courtly falconer had more chances than many other princely office-holders or servants to come in contact with a prince or a young king due to the special place of this art in early seventeenth-century court life. At this time, learning to hunt with birds was seen as an important part of princely education. Especially at the royal courts of France and England, hunts with falcons were practised frequently enough to offer various possibilities of contact. Consequently, while Luynes' case is certainly the most spectacular, it is not the only one in Europe. Only a few years before Luynes began his career at the court of France, an English gentleman-falconer, Sir Thomas Monson (*c.*1564–1641), had become one of the closest confidants of King James I.

A closer look at Monson's courtly career brings to light striking similarities and even some points of contact to that of Luynes, although the Englishman started from a higher level and never reached the heights of his French counterpart.[56]

[55] For a comparative analysis of the phenomenon, see Elliott/Brockliss, eds, *The World of the Favourite*; Asch, '"Lumine solis"'; Hirschbiegel/Paravicini, eds, *Der Fall des Günstlings*. On the role of minions and the semantics of favouritism at the French court, see especially Le Roux, *La faveur du roi*.

[56] On Thomas Monson, no comprehensive study exists. The following information is based on Bradley, 'Monson, Thomas', and Watson/Sgroi, 'Monson'.

Thomas Monson was already a knight (1588), the heir of his late father's estates in Lincolnshire (1593), and a Member of Parliament for Lincoln county (since 1597), when he came in closer contact with England's first Stuart king. The various court offices he obtained in the following years—Chancellor to Queen Anne (1603), Gentleman Usher of the Privy Chamber (1604), Keeper of the Armoury at Greenwich, and Master of the Armoury at the Tower (1611)—were not directly connected to falconry. Yet, according to contemporary accounts, Monson's excellence in falconry, James' preferred hunting sport, played an important role in the establishment of a close relationship with the king who made him a hereditary baronet of Cerleton in 1611. In a portrait painted at this time, Monson is accordingly depicted as a falconer in a splendid court dress (Figure 4.3). In his critical account on the court of King James I, Anthony Weldon (1583–1648) later conceded that Monson had been a falconer 'as no Prince in

Figure 4.3 Portrait of Sir Thomas Monson, oil on panel, attributed to Robert Peake the Elder, 1610/11. (There are two copies of this portrait, one of which was previously attributed to Sir L'Estrange Mortdaunt. However, the official insignia and age recorded on one version are consistent with Thomas Monson's biography.)
Source: Bonhams, London, Auction 30 April 2014, lot 55.

Christendom had; for, what Flights other Princes had, he would excell them for his Master, in which one was at the Kite.'[57]

Consequently, Monson obtained the office of the king's Master Falconer around the time when the cabinet falconry was created in France.[58] This was probably no coincidence. The two courts of the neighbouring kingdoms closely observed each other through the accounts of their ambassadors, and according to Weldon, even a sort of direct competition between falconers sent over from France and Monson's team existed during that time. It ended with a triumphal performance of Monson's gyrfalcons who killed nine kites.[59] However, when shortly after,

> all the Lords desired the King but to walk out of Royston Townes end, to see that Flight, which was one of the most stateliest Flights of the world,…the Kite went to such a mountee, and the Hawke after her, as all the field lost sight of Kite and Hawke…, and neither Kite nor Hawke were either seen or heard of to this present, which made all the Court conjecture it a very ill omen.[60]

In Weldon's narrative, this anecdote anticipates Monson's spectacular fall some years (and pages in his book) later. In October 1615, Monson was accused of complicity in the alleged poisoning of the courtier and poet Sir Thomas Overbury (1581–1613); subsequently, he was arrested, put into the Tower, and brought to court.[61] When he was finally released without sentence in 1617, Monson had already lost all his court offices and remained a persona non grata at the royal court until 1620. Thomas Monson spent the rest of his life in retirement and in a rather precarious financial situation until he died in 1641 at the age of seventy-seven. In contrast to Luynes, Monson shared the fate of many courtly favourites whose career—challenged by a growing number of rivals—ended faster than it had begun.

While service in the royal falconry offered ambitious noblemen chances to advance, it could become a handicap once the actor had entered the central stages that were marked by rivalries and competition. In Weldon's account, his dependence on his falconry skills made Monson's career an especially airy one that fitted well with the description of his general character as a flatterer, musician, and

[57] Weldon, *The Court of King James* (1651), p. 96.

[58] The document and exact date of Monson's nomination seem not to have been preserved. The office of the 'Master Falconer' is mentioned for the first time in 1603, when Master Falconer Alexander Muncrieff and eight falconers were engaged only months after James' enthronement; see *Calendar of State Papers*, James I, vol. 3, p. 30 (10 August 1603).

[59] Weldon, *The Court of King James* (1651), p. 97. The event must have taken place around 1614 and not in 1624, as suggested in Robinson, *Sinews of Falconry*, pp. 35–6.

[60] Weldon, *The Court of King James* (1651), pp. 97–8.

[61] On the trial that finally culminated in an (unexecuted) sentence against James' former favourite Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset (1585–1645), and his wife Frances Howard, Countess of Essex, see Akrigg, *Jacobean Pageant*, pp. 190–204.

poisoner. In the case of Luynes, his opponents made a scandal of the favourite's allegedly low social origins and the vain tricks by which he had supposedly influenced the child-king in innumerable pamphlets.[62] Leaving out the spectacular flights on herons and kites that were praised by d'Arcussia and other falconry authors who sought for Luynes' patronage,[63] the negative campaign insisted on the non-noble character of the flights at the very beginning of Luynes' relationship with the king, portraying the favourite as a vulgar bird catcher (*oiseleur*) rather than a true falconer. 'Never an *oiseleur* has sold his birds for such a price; the flatterers do it well at court, but the kings should lock the door and their ear to such cheaters', lamented a long pamphlet against Luynes.[64]

Long after Luynes' death, the image of a man 'of such an obscure birth that he could not so much as write himself a gentleman' and who had based his whole career on 'furnishing' the king 'with a little piegrièche, a bird no bigger than a sparrow', was perpetuated and disseminated among an astonished (Protestant) European public. 'By this means the Falconer soared above all the highest mountains, the greatest princes in the kingdom in title, honour, power and offices.'[65] The damaged reputation of the falconer-favourite might have contributed to the fact that future *premier ministres* in France—Richelieu, Mazarin, Dubois—were chosen among candidates who had based their careers on university studies and ecclesiastical offices rather than hunting. At the same time, high military and court offices were increasingly reserved for members of the old sword nobility, especially after King Louis XIV's announcement that he would govern without a prime minister in 1661.[66]

Nevertheless, Luynes' high flight to the top of French society guaranteed his heirs a place at court well into the eighteenth century. His great-grandson Charles Philippe d'Albert, duc de Luynes (1695–1758), later became famous for his well-known memoirs on the court of Louis XV. Two other noble falconers who had been involved in the *coup de majesté* were also founders of new ducal dynasties: Luynes' younger brother, Honoré d'Albert, was made first duc de Chaulnes in 1621; François V, comte de La Rochefoucauld, the father of the renowned moral philosopher who had headed the heron flight in 1615, became duke and pair in 1622. Thus, the special place which falconry occupied at the court of young Louis

[62] See Kettering, *Power and Reputation*, pp. 217–42, esp. p. 221.

[63] Both treatises were dedicated to Luynes; see the forewords in Saint-Aulaire, *La Fauconnerie* (1619), and Harmont, *Le Miroir de la fauconnerie* ([1620], 1634 edn). An inventory compiled after Luynes' death lists personal copies of the works of Saint-Aulaire and d'Arcussia; see AN, MC/ET/VII/11, fol. 47v, written in late March 1622.

[64] Anonymus, *Recueil des pièces les plus curieuses* (1624), p. 325; see also ibid., p. 422.

[65] Quick, 'The Life of M. Daniel Chamier', p. 176. In his biography of the Huguenot theologian Daniel Chamier (1565–1621), the English Protestant John Quick (1636–1706), echoing the French anti-Luynes print propaganda, depicted Luynes as one of the main people responsible for the anti-Protestant campaigns in France.

[66] On the new arrangement that—contrary to the interpretation of Norbert Elias—brought the high nobility back to power, see Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones*.

XIII had long-term consequences on the composition of France's elite. Yet, when their heirs were engaged in royal hunts, they would only serve in the honorary position of *grand fauconnier* (like Luynes' son, Louis-Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes, 1620–1699) or *grand veneur* (like François VII and François VIII de la Rochefoucauld), and not as ordinary *gentilshommes de la fauconnerie*. The more practical tasks of working with birds of prey were now increasingly carried out by a professional, mostly non-noble, falconry corps.

4.3 Experts on the Move: The Falconry Corps

In 1612, the year when the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II died in Prague, the imperial *Hofstaatsverzeichnis* listed a total of fourteen falconers and falconer boys who served under the supervision of the *Falckhenmaister* (falcon master) Peter Paul della Grangia.[67] A hundred years later, in 1711, the imperial falconry in Laxenburg near Vienna was made up of thirty-six falconers and falconer boys, headed by the *Obristfalkenmeister* Ferdinand Franz Xaver Graf von der Wahl.[68] While the comparison of these numbers makes clear once again that the hypothesis of a general decline of falconry in the seventeenth century cannot be sustained, they might be less surprising for court historians. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European courts were shaped by an overall growth in terms of people and space, combined with an increasing local concentration and a more formal organization of court life.[69] Thus, the growing numbers of professional falconers at court mirror a general trend. Nevertheless, a closer look at the development and social composition of the falconries of the king of France and the Holy Roman Emperor brings to light some different aspects. The remarkable geographic mobility not only of the falcons, but also of the falconers, illustrates the fact that the early modern court society was an essentially transnational phenomenon to which the market-oriented republican citizens contributed as much as noble royal subjects.

The composition of the royal falconries in France changed significantly during the first decades of the seventeenth century, before its structure became more stable under Louis XIV (Figure 4.4).[70] In 1596, two years after Henri IV's coronation in Paris, the grand falconry and the falconry of the king's chamber counted 202 members, of which fifty-six were honorary 'gentlemen of the falconry'

[67] Hausenblasová, *Der Hof Kaiser Rudolfs II.*, pp. 365–6.
[68] HHStA OMeA ÄZA 23, 1711, fol. 649 (11 April 1711).
[69] See Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, ch. 3.
[70] The following numbers are based on my analysis of the French royal falconry *états* that can be found in AN Z 1a 491, AN Z 1a 493a, AN Z 1a 494a, AN K 145, and AN O 1 977. The full dataset has been made accessible on the University of Bern's Open Repository: see 'Falconers at the Royal Court of France', provided by Nadir Weber and Debora Heim, https://doi.org/10.48620/117.

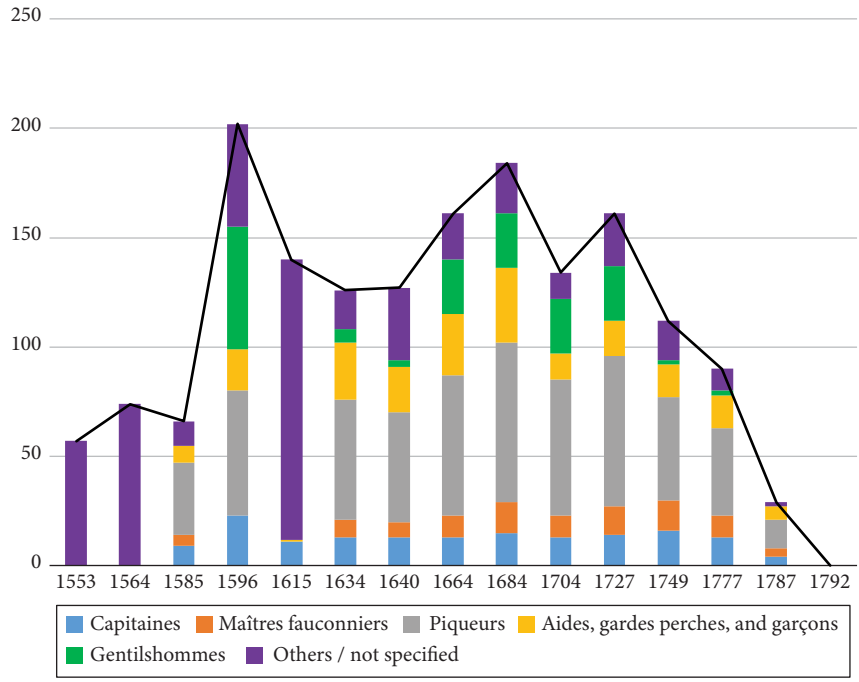

Figure 4.4 Falconers at the Royal Court of France, 1553–1792. This graph shows the number of people who served in the three falconries at the French royal court at different times. In some cases, due to different recording, data from other *États* have had to be added, so some uncertainty remains. Overall, however, the graph illustrates the expansion of falconry around 1600 and its decline in the late eighteenth century
Source: By the author, produced with the assistance of Debora Heim.

(*gentilshommes de la fauconnerie*). This unequalled number points to the importance of falconry and other sorts of hunting for elite integration at court in the early years of Bourbon rule.[71] Despite the creation of the *fauconnerie du Cabinet du roi* in 1611–12, the number of courtly falconers amounted to merely *c.*140 in 1615 according to Charles d'Arcussia; this smaller number could be explained by the reduction of the *gentilshommes* serving the *Grande Fauconnerie* and the chamber's falconry from eighty members to fifteen members in 1610.[72] In Richelieu's France, the three royal falconries still counted more than 120 falconers but the number of *gentilshommes de la fauconnerie* was further reduced to six. Yet, there was no steady trend of reduction. In 1684, two years after the relocation of Louis

[71] See also Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*, ch. VII.
[72] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy', *La fauconnerie* (1644), pp. 164–5. There is no ordinary *état* for these years, so the numbers offered by d'Arcussia have to be treated with some caution. On the composition of the royal falconry under Louis XIII, see also Griselle, *Ecurie, Vénerie, Fauconnerie*.

XIV's court to Versailles, 174 falconers served the king, and the number of *gentilshommes* had risen again to twenty-five. After the reformation of the falconry in 1748, the personnel in the two falconries levelled off at about ninety people until the breakdown of the *ancien régime* in France. Thus, at least nominally, the French royal falconries remained the best-equipped princely falconry corps in Europe—even at a time when the sovereigns had already lost personal interest in the art of flying birds.[73]

The imperial falconry corps started from a lower level, but also achieved a relatively stable composition in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Whereas the Holy Roman Emperor's falconry corps was made up of a small number of falconers in 1612 both in comparison to France and to later times—a fact that can be partly explained by the composite nature of the Habsburg political system[74]—the functional differentiation among the falconers remained similar. In the eighteenth century, the position for a hawker ('*habichtfalckhner*') had disappeared, and the magpie flight was now combined with the hunt on crow. Yet besides these changes, the falconry corps was still divided into four distinct 'parties' (*Partheyen*) that specialized in the hunt on heron, kite, crow, and waterfowl and field animals (*Revier*). The falconers' number levelled off at thirty to forty members in the second half of the seventeenth century.[75] In 1674, the falconry of Emperor Leopold I consisted of thirty-four members: twenty-six falconers of different status who served the four parties, the *Obristfalkenmeister*, his secretary, two heron keepers, two servants responsible for the Eagle owls, and two 'boys' looking after the falconry's hounds.[76] A hundred years later, in 1771, Joseph II's and Maria Theresa's falconry corps counted forty-one members in total, of which thirty-one were active falconers serving the four parties.[77]

By the eighteenth century at the latest, this falconry corps had taken on the character of an organization with clearly regulated membership and remuneration. The payments for the various members of the imperial falconry corps varied greatly, depending on their social status rather than their duties. In 1771, it

[73] I will discuss the reasons for this paradox in Chapter 6.3.

[74] Under Rudolph II, the imperial court resided in Prague, but at least for a certain time, separate hunting services for Upper and Lower Austria continued to exist. Also in later times, distant territories ruled by the Austrian Habsburgs had their own courts and falconries, for instance, the courts in Brussels and Naples. The Court of Brussels, for instance, engaged a *grand fauconnier des Pays bas* with eight falconers. See St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, p. 18, and Duerloo, 'The Hunt in the Performance of Archducal Rule', pp. 122–3, and for the general context, Vermeir/Raemaekers/Muñoz, eds, *A Constellation of Courts*.

[75] For the numbers discussed here, see Kubiska-Scharl/Pölzl, *Die Karrieren des Wiener Hofpersonals*, pp. 405–6; Sulzbeck, *Jägerei und Falknerei*, pp. 50–1; and the dataset 'Falconers at the Emperor's Court' on the University of Bern's Open Repository, provided by Nadir Weber and Debora Heim, https://doi.org/10.48620/116.

[76] St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, p. 18.

[77] See HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 1 (1771), no. 49. See the full transcript of this source and the figure on the composition of the Laxenburg falconry in 'Supplementary Materials', Figs. 4 and 5, https://doi.org/10.48620/88108.

descended from 350 Reichstaler (Rt.) for the *Obristfalkenmeister* for one quarter of service (April to June) to 106 Rt. and 15 Kreuzer (Kr.) for falcon masters (*Meister*) leading the four parties, 80 Rt. 30 K. for ordinary falconers (*Knecht*, *Falkoniere*) or heron keepers, and 31 Rt. 39 Kr. for a falconer boy (*Falkner-Jung*), complemented by payments in kind and free lodging in the rooms of the imperial falconry in Laxenburg. On the same payment list, the crossed out names of those who had passed away and were replaced by others make clear that these positions were strictly defined and limited.

The detailed documentation of the imperial falconry's organization in the second half of the eighteenth century allows us to reconstruct the individual careers of certain falconers in more detail. When a falcon master, the head of a party, died or retired, he was usually replaced by an experienced ordinary falconer of his own party, which could initiate a cascade of promotions. Following the death of the falcon master of the heron party, Johann Georg Räbel, on 3 March 1778, the riding falconer (*berittener Falconier*) Philipp Wurst, who had already served the imperial falconry for forty-two years as a boy, *Knecht*, and falconer, succeeded him in this position.[78] As a consequence, a falconer boy could advance to the position of an ordinary falconer and an *Extra Jung* to the now vacant position of the ordinary falconer boy. Usually, such promotions were proposed by the chief falconers in Laxenburg themselves and submitted to the secretary in Vienna before they were confirmed by the *Obristfalkenmeister*, who could sign and seal promotions independently from other court offices. The falconry thus operated largely autonomously; confirmation by the emperor's chancery was a formality unless substantial savings were demanded from above.

The leading positions of the French and the Austrian falconry corps in Baroque Europe become evident if we compare the numbers of their falconers with those of the other great monarchies. The case of England, for example, shows a lower level and greater fluctuations in the seventeenth century. In 1603, the royal master falconer of James I supervised eight ordinary falconers. In 1624, the king's falconry temporarily expanded to '24 falconers ordinarily kept by the King' with thirty casts of hawks. In 1660, when the royal falconry was restored, the new master of the hawks employed twenty-eight falconers and hired five additional falconers in the following years. Yet, already in 1667, King Charles II decided to abolish two out of four flights (heron and crow); in 1685, the falconry was further reduced under James II, before being entirely abolished between 1699 and 1702 under William III and Queen Mary.[79] In Spain, the royal falconry had sixty to seventy members around 1600, at the height of the Catholic Monarchy's European

[78] See HHStA HA OJäA 857, Fasz. 8 (1778), nos 23–6.

[79] See *Calendar of State Papers*, James I, vol. 3, 10 August 1603; ibid., vol. 158, 30 January 1624; ibid., vol. 169, no. 17, Lord Brooke to Sec. Conway, 3 July 1624; Bucholz, ed., *Office-Holders*, vol. 11, entry 'The Hawks 1660–1702', *Calendar of State Papers*, Charles II, vol. 11, no. 107, Sir Allan Apsley to Sec. Nicholas, August 1660; *Calendar of Treasury Books*, vol. 7, pp. 1646–50, July 1667, ibid., vol. 8, 4

supremacy, but declined from the 1640s due to cutbacks caused by the desperate financial situation, before finally being abolished in the middle of the eighteenth century.[80] Thus, the fact that the Danish kings always presented the largest number of gyrfalcons from Iceland to Vienna and Versailles reflected not only rank and diplomacy, but also the superior size of their falconries.[81]

Service in the courtly falconries usually became a transgenerational family business because it required specific expertise based on practical experience and the transfer of know-how. Like in other branches of the courts' service, certain surnames appear frequently and over a long period in the payment lists. In France, members of families like the Du Bois, La Motte, Le Febvre, Martin, and Robert served as *piqueurs* (mounted falconers) or *maître-fauconniers* in the royal falconries throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Beyond the annual reimbursements, the royal falconers profited from the financial and symbolic privileges of being '*commensal du roi*', which kept the service attractive for rural noble or ambitious non-noble families even in times when falconry ceased to be a stepping stone towards personal contact with the king.[82] It seems that even after the abolishment of the honorary title of *gentilshommes de la fauconnerie du roi*, some of the members of the royal falconries were only falconers on paper, which would explain the oversize of the French falconry corps from a European perspective.[83] Especially on the level of chiefs or captains of the *vols*, the offices were often combined with other activities in the king's service. Nevertheless, a certain amount of know-how in falconry was needed on all levels of the service, and as flying with birds ceased to be a common practice among the nobility it became de facto a monopoly of certain families.

At the Austrian court, the replacement of vacant posts, even in leading positions, relied more on the individual *cursus honorum* than in France. At Laxenburg, a number of falconers had careers from falconer boy to falcon master—the highest position below master falconer—with several members of the same family often serving at different levels. For instance, from *c.*1745 to 1772, Philipp Weghuber served as master of the *Revier Parthey* after having served for

April 1685 (with a list counting twenty-six falconers); Bucholz, ed., *Office-Holders*, vol. 11, entry 'The Hawks 1660–1702', all consulted on BHO.

[80] See Martínez Millán/Labrador Arroyo, 'La pervivencia de la casa de Castilla: la caza', pp. 1045–92; on the numbers around 1600, see p. 1053. For the composition of the falconry in 1646, see ibid., pp. 1087–8. However, it is not entirely clear from the information provided which members were actually falconers and which were other hunters.

[81] See Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*, pp. 300–1.

[82] Not all but a large part of the falconry posts were connected with this status. The *commensaux (de la maison) du roi* were holders of a court office, for which they had to pay when entering service but profited from tax and other privileges that could be useful when combined with other professional activities. See Laverny, *Les domestiques commensaux du roi*, esp. pp. 34–6, 40–1, 159.

[83] Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, p. 638, interprets a passage in the diary of Besenval in this sense. Yet, there seems to be a confusion between the *gardes des aires* (who were responsible for the eyries and had to come to court only once a year) and the ordinary court falconers who lived in Montainville.

several decades as a falconer boy and ordinary falconer.[84] In this period, his son Johann (born in 1718) as well as their relative Franz Weghuber entered the imperial service as falconer boys. Subsequently, they were both promoted to ordinary falconers (*Knecht*) in the *Revier* and kite party. In February 1773, following the death of Philipp Weghuber, Johann succeeded his father as master of the *Revier Parthey*.[85] At about the same time, two members of the third generation, Johann Michael and Johann Joseph Weghuber, entered the service as falconer boys and were later promoted to ordinary falconers before being pensioned in 1793 when the imperial falconry closed its doors. In a similar way, the Bünnen (or Pinnen), Trendl, Stadler, Weinanz, and Wurst families established themselves as human resource reservoirs of the emperor's falconry in the eighteenth century. None of these families were of noble birth. However, their constant and reasonably well-paid service to the sovereign allowed them to establish themselves as members of the local elite in the small town of Laxenburg.[86]

Some prominent names in the Austrian rulers' falconry corps also point to Dutch and Flemish origins. In the 1720s, the Dutchman Arnoldus van der Wie (1700–1766) entered the service of the imperial falconry in Laxenburg and married a local woman, Catharina Elder. The two founded a numerous family—four of eight children survived childhood—and lived in a house on Wienerstrasse bought in 1730.[87] Van Wie's sons and grandsons then served the emperor's falconry until 1793. Other foreign falconers temporarily served the emperor and then returned to their places of origin. In particular, the Dutch town of Valkenswaard that we have encountered as an international hotspot in the trade of captured birds of prey was also the base of several highly mobile falconer dynasties. Falconers called Daams, Danckers, Hertroys, Verbruggen, Verhoeven, and Vermeulen appear on the payment lists of various European courts.[88] Sometimes even personally portrayed in their richly decorated red or blue uniforms (Figure 4.5), the Flemish and Dutch falconers gained the reputation of true international falconry specialists.

[84] It seems very plausible, although it is not certain, that the Philipp Weghuber mentioned as master of the *Revier* party is identical to the Philipp Weghueber who served as a falconer boy in 1713, when he married Eva Maria Offner. Their son Johannes Felix was born on 18 May 1718. See Suttner, *Laxenburg*, p. 239.

[85] See St Julian to Emperor Joseph II, Vienna, 20 February 1773, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 3, no. 8, and the instructions following the positive decision of Emperor Joseph II.

[86] See Suttner, *Laxenburg*, who has analysed the social composition of the small town between 1683 and 1740. Her alphabetic prosopography (pp. 94–255) already mentions several families of falconers that were still present in the falconry corps fifty years later. Some falconers like Johannes Georg Pruckner (1692–1759), whose only son Joseph (born in 1731) would become an imperial falconer, too, could afford to buy land to build a new house for his family in the village in 1725 (ibid., p. 112).

[87] Suttner, *Laxenburg*, p. 235.

[88] See Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*, on which the following information is based if not indicated otherwise.

Figure 4.5 Johann Heinrich Tischbein, *Reiherzyklus*, oil on canvas, 1764. The detail shows the Hessian landgrave's Dutch falconers, Bartel Royers, Willem Verbruggen, and Frans Bekkers, feeding the birds of prey after a successful heron hunt. Specially designed falconry bags, hat ornaments, and lures were part of the uniform of the princely falconry corps

Source: Museum Schloss Fasanerie, Fulda, B 389/Kulturstiftung des Hauses Hessen.

This reputation had been built up over decades and consolidated through family networks. Already at the beginning of the seventeenth century, at the time when Charles d'Arcussia felt obliged to claim that the French falconers surpassed their Dutch and Flemish colleagues in expertise, falconers from Valkenswaard were engaged by the Reformed Dutch Stadtholder Maurice of Orange and the Catholic Bavarian Duke Maximilian I. At the same time, they captured gyrfalcons in Iceland and Norway, first as independent entrepreneurs, later in the service of the kings of Denmark. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, falconers from Valkenswaard were engaged for considerable sums to modernize the falconries in Bavaria, Hesse-Kassel, Cologne, Saxony, Ansbach, Hannover, the Palatinate, and Vienna. Later, they also served the duke of Parma and the king of Portugal.[89] At the French court, where the practical falconry business was also

[89] Ibid., pp. 290–5.

increasingly given into the hands of foreign specialists in the course of the eighteenth century, falconers from the region of Antwerp in the Austrian Netherlands were preferred, but some falconers from Valkenswaard also made their way to Montainville.[90]

Eager to improve their chances or forced by cuts in the falconry budgets, some of these Dutch falconers changed their place of activity several times. For instance, Frans van den Heuvel, born in Valkenswaard in 1766, first served the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel as a falconer boy and then went to France in 1785 to serve the cabinet falconry of Louis XVI. When falconry in France came to an end with the Revolution in 1792, he entered the service of the prince of Anhalt-Bernburg. Two years later, Van den Heuvel moved to England to serve The Confederate Hawks of Great Britain club. After several decades of services abroad, Frans van den Heuvel finally returned to his homeland at the advanced age of seventy-four to support the brief renaissance of royal falconry at Het Loo Palace in the Netherlands.[91]

Not only the careers, but also the service of these professional falconers during the year showed a high degree of mobility. Every year, the Dutch falconers moved back and forth between the court and their hometowns—not unlike the peregrine falcons they trained. When the Elector of Cologne, Clemens August of Bavaria (r. 1723–61), reorganized his falconry in 1725, two falcon masters, eight ordinary falconers (*Knechte*), and five 'boys' originating from the Netherlands were newly employed. The employment contract stated that these falconers were to stay in their native country during the winter and then return in spring 'to humbly serve His Most Gracious Electoral Highness with heron, kite, and other sorts of falconry with greatest diligence and zeal'.[92] Accordingly, they only received their salaries for nine months every year, supplemented with precisely defined compensations for each gyrfalcon, peregrine, goshawk as well as heron or kite they kept and took with them for training purposes. This contract was renegotiated several times in the following years before a more stable arrangement was found, hand in hand with the creation of the Falkenlust hunting lodge. The 'Dutch Falconry' in the service of the Elector of Cologne included at times up to twenty-four mobile falconers who organized spectacular heron and kite hunts there during the hunting season, until the sudden death of the Elector in 1761 led to its dissolution.[93]

[90] See Goris, *Aloude valkerij in de Kempen*, and Tréton, *Histoire de Montainville*, pp. 266–9, based on sources from the communal archives of Montainville.

[91] See Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*, pp. 110, 115, 132, 218–19, 220–1, 295.

[92] Contract between the Elector and the 'Dutch falconry' ('niderländischen Falcknereÿ'), 6 July 1725, LA NRW, Abt. Rheinland, AA 0007: Kurköln II, Nr. 857, fol. 1–5, quote fol. 1r. See also Beckers, 'Die kurkölnische Falknerei', pp. 250–52.

[93] Beckers, 'Die kurkölnische Falknerei', pp. 260–8.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, this system was also adopted by other medium-sized courts. When the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel wanted to re-establish his falconry in 1762—to take advantage of the dissolution of the Elector of Cologne's falconry—his *Obristfalkenmeister* Ludolph von und zum Canstein explained that all the falconer masters in Brabant, after having bought and trained their birds, would soon 'go to their respective courts in order to serve for the coming falcon hunts in May'.[94] After the spring hunts, some courtly falconers again returned to their hometown to wait for the beginning of the catching season in early autumn, when they could buy new birds and bring them to court if necessary.[95] This established system of commuting had obvious advantages for both sides. For the falconers, their regular returns to their hometown allowed to keep their families in place and consolidate their status as persons of consequences in their local community. In Valkenswaard, they built magnificent town houses with the money they earned serving European rulers—and, depending on the situation, waited for better employment opportunities. For the courts, the temporary hiring of professional falconers could save costs, and the ongoing commuter life of the courtly falconers facilitated the regular provision of fresh birds of prey.

As a result of this constant mobility, a family-based network of Dutch falconers developed, creating additional links between different European courts, as the example of the Verhoeven family of Valkenswaard shows. From 1755 until his death in 1784, Jacobus Verhoeven, *maître fauconnier* of the king of Denmark, played a key role in the capture and distribution of Icelandic gyrfalcons, while the 'itinerant falconer' Willem Verhoeven was responsible for the transport of gyrfalcons from Iceland to Copenhagen and from there to selected European courts.[96] When the court of Hesse-Kassel re-established its falconry after the Seven Years War, there were thus good reasons to engage their kinsman Hendrik Verhoeven as master of the kite-party. In the following decades, Hendrik Verhoeven, who was promoted to *Falconier-Meister* in 1772, organized the purchase and transport of birds of prey for the landgrave's falconry and then introduced Peter Verhoeven—probably his son—to the same service.[97] At the emperor's falconry in Laxenburg, the Verhoeven family had been represented since the end of the seventeenth century.[98] In the 1770s, another Hendrik Verhoeven ('Heinrich Verhofen') was

[94] Von Canstein to Landgrave Frederick II, [Valkenswaard?], 4 March 1762, HStAM, 5, 12800.
[95] Von Canstein to Landgrave Frederick II, [Kassel?], 23 August 1762, HStAM, 5, 12800, fol. 50.
[96] Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*, pp. 88, 97–8, 296.
[97] See HStAM, 5, 12800 (on Verhoeven's appointment in 1763), HStAM, 5, 12813 (on his promotions to *Falkoniermeister* in 1772 and Burggraf zu Marburg in 1796), HStAM, 5, 12814 (*Falkoniers*, 1693–1801, on the career of Peter Verhoeven), and the correspondence regarding the purchase of birds in HStAM, 5, 12801–2.
[98] In the decades around 1700, Henricus Verhoeven (*c.*1644–1684), Jacob Verhoeven (1678–1739), and Johannes Verhoeven (1671–1723) all served as falcon masters in different parties but had no family in Laxenburg; see the information based on death records in Suttner, *Laxenburg*, p. 236.

engaged there as falconer in the heron party,[99] which certainly facilitated the contact with Jacobus Verhoeven, the Danish king's master falconer, who regularly negotiated with the emperor's *Obristfalkenmeisteramt* Count Saint Julien in Vienna about the price of gyrfalcons.[100]

Similar connections facilitated the rise of other falconer dynasties from Valkenswaard such as the Vermeulen, Daems, Danckers, Hertroys, and Goossens whose members were engaged at various courts and were closely tied to each other through marriage bonds.[101] They ensured the rapid transfer of expertise across Europe, provided valuable captured raptors and game birds, arranged for the necessary equipment where required, and organized the transport of not only the birds but also entire falconry teams. Thus, it was a transnational network of falconers originating from the republican Netherlands that discreetly organized much of the golden age of falconry in courtly Europe.

4.4 The Master Falconers in Court Society

Whereas the capture, care, and training of raptors were increasingly concentrated in the hands of professionals with bourgeois or rural origins, the positions at the top of the princely falconries remained a prerogative of the higher nobility. Although the Master Falconer or Master of the Hawks, *grand fauconnier*, and *Obristfalkenmeister* appear on the same budget lists as the common falconers, their duties and recruitment differed significantly from the other members of the corps. Like the Masters of the Horse (*grand écuyer*, *Obriststallmeister*) and the Masters of the Hunt (*grand veneur*, *Obristjägermeister*), who were also responsible for a large apparatus of men and animals in the service of the prince, the master falconers belonged to a small group of office holders at the top of the courts' hierarchies.[102] As such, this office offered considerable ceremonial privileges, financial compensation, and opportunities to act as a patronage broker—and were a constant object of noblemen's ambitions and competition.

In theory, the office of *grand fauconnier de France*, dating back to the thirteenth century, was one of the most prestigious offices at the French royal court. As a *grand office*, it included the honour of being nominated by the king himself,

[99] See the 'Classifications-Steuer pro Anno 1772' of the emperor's falconry in Laxenburg in HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 2, no. 61.

[100] See, e.g., Martschläger to Jacobus Verhoeven, Vienna, 22 February 1774, regarding the purchase of ten birds for the emperor's falconry, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 4 (1774), no. 15.

[101] See Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*, pp. 164–83.

[102] On these other animal-related organizations and their place in court life, see Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*; Landry/Mansel, eds, 'Horses and Courts'; Hengerer/Weber, eds, *Animals and Courts*. I use the term Master Falconer—which was also used in contemporary English sources—to designate the highest position of the princely falconries although the exact names of the office varied from place to place.

serving him or his family regularly, and exercising authority over dependent functions including nominations.[103] For his services, the grand falconer received 1,200 livres every year, and up to 9,000 livres were at his disposal for purchasing birds and maintaining the falconry.[104] This mix of symbolic and monetary compensation made the office especially valuable. In 1677, its value—that is, the sum that a new holder had to pay to the crown or to the previous holder—was estimated to be no less than 250,000 livres.[105] Like in other domains of the French royal household, the office was often passed on through family ties. After the death of the high-flyer Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes, in December 1621, Claude de Lorraine, duc de Chevreuse (1578–1657), who married Luynes' widow, became grand falconer. In 1643, he was followed in this office by his stepson and Luynes' heir, Louis-Albert d'Albert, second duc de Luynes (1620–1690). In 1650, the latter decided to sell the office to Nicolas Dauvet, comte Desmarets (Figure 4.6).[106] Then the office passed in direct line from father to son over three generations thanks to the royal *lettres de survivance*.[107] This allowed the Desmarets family to add two lures to their coat of arms, stay close to the centre of power at Versailles over decades, and combine their office with other important duties in the king's service and permanent access to royal patronage.

However, a French particularity severely curtailed the pleasure of being grand falconer of France: the existence of the king's cabinet falconry with an independent captain at the top. Although from 1617 to 1621, Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes, for whom the new office of captain of the cabinet falconry had originally been created, occupied both positions, the office and the related structures remained independent from the *Grande Fauconnerie*. After having changed hands several times, it fell into the possession of the Forget family, nobles of the robe who turned into nobles of the sword by dint of this office.[108] A brief look at the history of this family, little known to historians, shows how, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, service in the royal falconry, while no longer a direct route to power as

[103] On the role of the *grandes offices* or *grandes charges*, see Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones*, here p. 153. On the office of *grand fauconnier* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see also the information provided by Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, pp. 628–38.

[104] See, e.g., 'Etat des officiers de la Grande Fauconnerie et des oyseaux du Cabinet du Roy fait et arrêté par le feu Roy Louis XIII. À St. Germain Le 17^{e} avril 1634' in AN, Z 1a 493a, fol. 9–17.

[105] 'Brevet d'assurance de la somme de iic Lm lt pour le Sr Marquis Desmarets', Saint-Germain, 23 February 1677, AN, O^{1} 21, fol. 57.

[106] On the genealogy of the Dauvet-Desmarets family, see La Chesnaye-Desbois, *Dictionnaire de la noblesse*, vol. 5 (1772), pp. 518–24. There are different dates for the life of Nicolas Dauvet, comte Desmarets.

[107] See Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, pp. 631–4; Newton, *Almanach de la Cour*, pp. 4039–40.

[108] The following information is based on my analysis of the Forget family archives stored at BnF, site Arsenal, Ms 7862, 7868–79, and 7884–89. See also the complementary information in Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, pp. 638–40, and Tréton, *Histoire de Montainville*, pp. 255–9. On the typical transformations of *nobles de robe* into *nobles d'épée* through court offices that gave access to other courtly and military offices and marriage alliances, see Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones*, p. 61.

Figure 4.6 Nicolas Dauvet, Comte Desmarets, etching by Jean Frosne, 1668. In this portrait, the Comte Desmarets is presented as *Summus Galliarum Falconarius*, i.e. 'Supreme Falconer of the French'. On his family coat of arms, the two lures are identifiable as a sign of his great office of the crown, which he held in conjunction with the offices of *lieutenant-général* and governor of Beauvais
Source: Musée du château de Versailles, LP32.42.1/RMN-Grand Palais.

it had been in the time of the first duc de Luynes, could nevertheless serve as a means of establishing oneself at court in the longer term and of climbing the social ladder.[109]

Originating from an elite family of Amboise, Jean Forget, sieur de Bruillevert (*c.*1595–1678), *maître d'hôtel* of King Louis XIII, had laid the foundations for the court careers of his two sons. François Forget (1629–1703) got the office as a chief of the heron party in the *Grande Fauconnerie* in 1661, became *conseiller du Roi*, and was later even nominated *grand maitre des eaux et forêts de l'Île de France*,

[109] Having previously held the office of a chief on the grand falconry's *vol de rivière*, Claude bought the office of *capitaine des vols du Cabinet du roi* for 77,500 livres in 1676. See the receipt signed by the former holder of the office, Louis Anne de Sabrevois, Sieur d'Escluzelles, on 14 January 1676, in BnF, site Arsenal, Ms 7870.

which went hand in hand with his social rise to a *vicomte* and finally *comte* de Bruillevert. His younger brother Claude Forget, sieur de Fouilleuse (1635–*c.*1717), after having served as a chief on the grand falconry's *vol de rivière*, bought the office of *capitaine des vols du Cabinet du roi* for 77,500 livres in 1676.[110] Twelve years later, he was also nominated as royal governor in Loudun—an office that further underlined the family's claimed status as members of the *noblesse d'épée*. His two sons entered the royal service as *pages du Roy* and members of the royal French guards, combined with offices in the cabinet falconry and as a *capitaines des gardes des aires*. In 1704, Claude resigned as a head of the king's cabinet falconry in favour of his son Jean-Claude (1675–1755), who then served as *capitaine du vol des oiseaux du Cabinet* for fifty years and passed substantial estates in Versailles, Fontainebleau, and Montainville to his heirs. His oldest son Jean-Claude II (1731–1782) followed him as captain of the cabinet falconry.[111] Moreover, he became knight of the royal order of Notre Dame du Mont Carmel and received the title of marquis for his branch of the family. His successor and last captain of the cabinet falconry, Jean-Claude III marquis de Forget (1757–1792), also combined the duties in falconry with services as a Knight Hospitaller of Malta, where he went in 1776 for two years, and as captain in the king's Polish regiment that garrisoned in Strasbourg. These combinations of offices show that the noble *charges* in the cabinet falconry were anything but a full-time job, but for the Forget family, they formed the basis for regular payments, special privileges, and permanent access to the court.

With their impressive success story, the Forgets clashed with the pretentions of other players in the ceremonial system of honour and display—especially the Desmarets, their neighbours in office. Already in 1676, just after having switched from the grand falconry's river party to the top of the cabinet falconry, Claude Forget challenged his former superior's right to present the torn off head of killed crows to the king. This bloody privilege was the symbolic proxy of the more fundamental question whether the captain of the cabinet falconry was independent from the grand falconer or not. Louis XIV was fully aware of the delicacy of the problem and therefore tried to steer a middle course. He stated that the grand falconer could present the trophies of the cabinet's falcons to the king when he was present, but assured that he had no right to interfere in the captain's right to select officers for the cabinet falconry.[112]

[110] See the receipt signed by the former holder of the office, Louis Anne de Sabrevois, Sieur d'Escluzelles, on 14 January 1676, in BnF, site Arsenal, Ms 7870.

[111] See the detailed death inventory, dated 21 June 1782, in BnF, site Arsenal, Ms 7877, after Jean-Claude's death on 16 June 1782.

[112] 'Réglement entre le Grand fauconnier et le Chef du vol des oyseaux du cabinet', Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 14 March 1676, AN, O^1 20, fol. 105, and BnF, site Richelieu, Fonds Clairambault, 830, fol. 171.

For Claude Forget, the first point was not satisfactory. Immediately after the death of his rival, Alexis-François Dauvet, comte Desmarets, in 1688, he again claimed the right to present the heads of game birds to the king. This time, the requester was in a much better position because the new grand falconer of France, François Dauvet, comte Desmarets (1681–1718), was a seven-year-old boy who could hardly argue for precedence.[113] Accordingly, the king agreed to a new regulation, stating 'that the chief of the flights of his cabinet's birds has all honours of his office when he finds himself on a hunt with the grand falconer, that he receives the orders directly from His Majesty, and presents the heads to Him.'[114] Moreover, the chief of the cabinet falconry received additional funds to buy new birds independently of the grand falconer. Combined with the ceremonial right to accompany the king on his journeys, the captain of the cabinet falconry was now in a fully independent position that even guaranteed much better access to the sovereign than the 'temporary' services of the grand falconer.[115]

Following the early death of Louis-François Dauvet, marquis Desmarets (1711–1748), it became clear that the prospering Forget clan would surpass their rivals. The office of grand falconer of France became a free patronage resource that changed hands several times. First, the office was handed over to Louis César de la Baume, duc de La Vallière (1708–1780), a former military officer and intimate of the king's official mistress, Madame de Pompadour. After a short interlude by Jules César de Cremeaux, marquis d'Entragues (1732–1780), who died from smallpox only a few days after having taken his oath as grand falconer,[116] the office passed to the Queen's protégé Joseph-Hyacinthe-François de Paul de Rigaud, comte de Vaudreuil (1740–1817). While the Luynes and Desmarets lines had passed their expertise in falconry from generation to generation, the office that had been 'the most brilliant' at the royal court in former times had now turned into a courtly sinecure, as the baron de Besenval later noted in his *Mémoires*.[117] While it continued to offer a reason for staying at Versailles and profit from additional privileges and payments, the office of grand falconer had lost its practical functions and symbolic prestige at court. It was therefore no coincidence that the *Grande Fauconnerie* was already abolished one year before the outbreak of the

[113] This was not unusual as the *grands offices* were de facto in the possession of the family. Consequently, the king's letter of nomination stated that 'although not much advanced in age and not in a state to serve at the moment', the young Desmarets would receive his office in consideration for the services of his father and grandfather. See the printed nomination dated Versailles, 2 May 1688, BnF, site Richelieu, Fonds Clairambault, 830, fol. 212a.

[114] 'Reglement pour les Fauconneries du Roy', Versailles, 25 April 1688, BnF, site Richelieu, Fonds Clairambault, 830, fol. 212. Consequently, the regulation of 1676 was annulled.

[115] According to the official *Etat de France* of 1749, the captain of the cabinet falconry was at the king's side during all military campaigns and 'flies every day at the door of the king's coach'; later, in 1788, Forget would claim precedence based on his more regular services to the king. See Newton, *La petite cour*, p. 90.

[116] Newton, *Almanach de la Cour*, p. 2806.

[117] Besenval, *Mémoires*, p. 306.

revolution. This was the final but short-lived triumph of the Forget family after more than one hundred years of rivalry with the grand falconers.

Compared to the situation at the French court, the Habsburg rulers' *Obristfalkenmeister* (*Oberstfalkenmeister*, in modern translation, 'supreme falcon master') found themselves in a less stressful situation. This court office, which was formally attached to the service of the sovereign of Austria (*Landesamt*) and not to that of the Holy Roman Emperor,[118] had a less prestigious genealogy than that of the grand falconer in France. At the end of the sixteenth and in the early seventeenth centuries, the chief officers of the emperor's falconry, who were of modest social origins, only had the title of '*Falckhenmaister*' (falcon master).[119] However, in the following decades, the prestige of the office grew in line with the prestige of falconry and became a domain of hereditary counts. First, Count Bruno III von Mansfeld-Bornstedt (1576–1644), both *Obriststallmeister* and *Obristjägermeister* since 1615, was also responsible for the emperor's falconry service.[120] In 1637, Count Georg Achaz von Losenstein (1597–1653) was named *Obristfalkenmeister*, a sign of the growing independence and prestige of this office, followed in 1642 by Count Franz Albrecht von Harrach (1614–1666). Both noblemen combined this office with other courtly titles—chamberlain and secret councillor, respectively—and were later promoted to *Obriststallmeister* (supreme master of the stables), one of the top four court offices.[121] Between 1657 and 1666, it was Count Franz Bernhard von Urschenbeck (1615–1672) who served as the emperor's master falconer before he was promoted to *Obristjägermeister*. Thus, in seventeenth-century Vienna, the office of *Obristfalkenmeister* was usually a temporary episode in the career of well-born courtiers.

Unlike in France, the position of chief falconer at court did not become a formalized, quasi-hereditary family possession. Nevertheless, one family succeeded in holding the office at the Habsburg court for most of the eighteenth century: the counts of Saint Julien.[122] According to the family chronicle, Count Adam Max Saint Julien von und zu Wallsee (1639/40–1683), son of the French nobleman and imperial military officer Henri Sieur de Guyard et Saint Julien (1592–1642), had acquired special expertise in falconry on his cavalier tour in 1658, during which

[118] The same is also the case for the Austrian Master of the Hunt; see Hengerer, *Kaiserhof und Adel*, p. 105.

[119] Hausenblasová, *Der Hof Kaiser Rudolfs II.*, p. 364.

[120] Sulzbeck, *Jägerei und Falknerei*, p. 28.

[121] See the database *Kaiser und Höfe* (https://kaiserhof.geschichte.lmu.de/, accessed 13 January 2021). On the social composition and functioning of the emperor's court at this time, see Hengerer, *Kaiser und Adel*.

[122] The following information is primarily based on the short monography by Clemens Grundacker, Graf von St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*; Wurzbach, 'Saint Julien-Wallsee', and the extensive '*Chronik des gräflichen Hauses Guyart St. Julien Walsee*' written by the same in 1878 and kept in the Saint Julien Family Archives at Wolfsegg Castle in Upper Austria. I am indebted to Edouardo Saint Julien-Wallsee for access to this archive and many valuable references.

he spent several weeks in Valkenswaard learning the art of training falcons.[123] Back in Vienna, he served as chamberlain and '*Under Falckhenmaister*' of Lower Austria, before being promoted to Emperor Leopold I's '*Obrist Falckhenmaister*' in 1674.[124] When Saint Julien died at the early age of forty-four, he was first followed in the office by three other high-ranking courtiers, but in 1712, Count Johann Albert von Saint Julien-Wallsee (1681–1743) succeeded in getting it back into the hands of his family.[125] Through his service, which included the organization of the magnificent falcon hunts in Laxenburg, Johann Albert von Saint Julien became one of the closest confidants of Emperor Charles VI, who enabled him to purchase the estate of Wartenburg at the river Vöckla in Upper Austria in 1729.[126] Saint Julien had a new pleasure castle built there, which celebrated the office of the chief falconer through its iconography (Figure 4.7). In September 1732, he was even able to receive the emperor and his heirs, Maria Theresa of Austria and Francis Stephan of Lorraine, in his new castle for several days.[127]

For a certain time, Saint Julien's office of *Obristfalkenmeister* coexisted with the hereditary honorary office of *Obrist-Erblandfalkenmeister* ('supreme falcon master of the Hereditary Lands') of Lower Austria that had been given to the Georg Andreas von Volkra in 1705 and then passed to the latter's son.[128] Yet, in 1736, when the last Count Volkra-Heidenreichstein, Christoph Ferdinand (d. 1740), lost this honorary office because of 'mental and physical indisposition', Emperor Charles VI awarded it his *Obristfalkenmeister* and favourite Saint Julien, who from now on could combine the two titles during the rest of his life.[129] His eldest son Johann Joseph Wilhelm (1704–1794) then inherited the hereditary office, but also large monetary debts; thus the office of *Obristfalkenmeister* was taken over by Count Carl Anton von Harrach (1692–1758), who was also

[123] St. Julien, '*Chronik des gräflichen Hauses Guyart St. Julien Walsee*' (Ms Saint Julien Family Archives), p. 92.

[124] St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, pp. 28–9. An archival document proves that Saint Julien was able to take over the office for a compensation of 1,500 guilders; see contract between Saint Julien and the Count Bartholomäus von Starhemberg (1625–1676), Linz, 24 February 1674, OÄLA, Archiv Starhemberg, no. 4846.

[125] See Sulzbeck, *Jägerei und Falknerei*, pp. 32, 36; Berg, *Pürschgang*, p. 29; 'Oberst-Falkenmeister-Dekret für Johann Albert von St. Julien', Vienna, 18 January 1712, ed. in St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, pp. 29–30.

[126] On his career, see St. Julien, '*Chronik des gräflichen Hauses Guyart St. Julien Walsee*' (Ms Saint Julien Family Archives), pp. 122–36.

[127] *Wienerisches Diarum*, no. 73, 10 September 1732, pp. 6–7.

[128] See St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, pp. 25–7. The eldest son inherited the title of *Obrist-Erblandfalkenmeister*, while all other male descendants were entitled to bear the title of *Erblandfalkenmeister*. The creation of this hereditary honorary office (*Erbamt*) in 1705 reveals the increased standing of falconry at the emperor's court. While these two offices co-existed, the *Obrist-Falkenmeister* was also called *Obrist-Hof-Falkenmeister* ('supreme court falcon master') in order to prevent misunderstandings.

[129] *Diplom Karl VI. dd. Wien den 24. Dezember 1736* (ed. 1860), quote p. 34.

Figure 4.7 Portrait of Count Johann Albert von Saint Julien-Wallsee, oil on canvas, *c.*1730. This large-format portrait, which is prominently displayed in Neuwartenburg Castle, depicts the emperor's *Obristhoffalkenmeister* in his hunting uniform with a white gyrfalcon on his fist. Two additional hunting falcons can be distinguished on a cadge at the lower right

Source: Schloss Neuwartenburg, Timelkam, Austria, photo by the author.

Obristjägermeister.[130] Only in 1758, Saint Julien finally succeeded in obtaining the office of *Obristhoffalkenmeister* back again—in consideration of the continuous

[130] On Harrach's service as *Obristfalkenmeister*, see the documentation in AVA, FA Harrach, WA 2382.

services of his father and grandfather that were kept 'in best memory' by Empress Maria Theresa.[131] Saint Julien held this office for decades in personal union with that of *Obristküchenmeister* (chief of the emperor's kitchen), until the imperial falconry was finally dissolved in 1793. Whereas the history of the imperial falconry and its highest position had ended abruptly, the family proudly kept their title of 'supreme falcon master of the Hereditary Lands' well into the nineteenth century.[132]

On a European scale, the prestige of the position leading the princely falconries and the status of its holders varied from place to place and from time period to time period. In England, the position of the king's 'master of the hawks' or 'master falconer' had become increasingly important during the reign of James I and probably reached its highest point of prestige after the Restoration of the Stuart King Charles II in 1660. In this year, the extravagant peer Charles Dormer, second Earl of Carnarvon (1632–1709), and the loyal royalist Sir Allan Apsley (1616–1685), both petitioned for the position of the king's Master of the Hawks. Referring to a promise of the king, Sir Apsley even asked for the title of 'master of the privy hawks'—obviously inspired by the French position of *capitaine des oiseaux du Cabinet du roi* that the Stuart court had come to know during their exile.[133] Finally, he became Master of the Hawks with several dozens of falconers and birds in his service. In 1675, Apsley was followed in this office by no less a person than Charles Beauclerk, earl of Burford and later duke of St Albans (1670–1726), the king's illegitimate son. Yet the practical duties of the office were fulfilled by two less remarkable 'deputies' of the Master of the Hawks, and soon the falconry service was reduced due to high costs and finally abolished after the death of King William III.[134]

On the Iberian Peninsula, court positions such as that of the *halconero mayor* (major falconer) of the king of Aragon can be traced back to the late medieval period. In seventeenth-century Spain, the office of *caçador mayor de la caça de volatería* (major hunter of the hunt of falconry) was held by Ruy III Gómez de Silva y Mendoza de la Cerda, Duque de Pastrana (1585–1626)—and enhanced by his status and great wealth. It still played a major role at the Spanish court in the mid-seventeenth century but then gradually lost its practical significance during

[131] 'Oberst-Hof-Falkenmeister-Dekret für Johann Joseph von St. Julien', Vienna, 26 May 1758, ed. in St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, pp. 30–1. On Johann Joseph's biography, see also St. Julien, '*Chronik des gräflichen Hauses Guyart St. Julien Walsee*' (Ms Saint Julien Family Archives), pp. 150–86.

[132] This privilege was last confirmed by Emperor Franz Joseph I in 1850. Accordingly, in his book on the history of his family published in 1876, Clemens Grundacker St. Julien still presents himself as 'Oberst-Erbland-Falkenmeister in Oesterreich unter der Enns'; see St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, cover page. I will come back to these ceremonies in Chapter 5.4.

[133] See *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, Charles II, 1660–1, no. 75, and the following decisions.

[134] See Buchholz, ed., *Office-Holders in Modern Britain*, vol. 11, pp. 216–21, BHO, and the information on Apsley and Burford at http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/MasterIndex.pdf (accessed 25 January 2021).

the reign of King Charles II.[135] Finally, the royal falconry and its positions were completely abolished in 1748 under the Bourbon King Ferdinand VI (r. 1746–59).[136] In the neighbouring kingdom of Portugal, the trends were inversed. In the mid-sixteenth century, under King Sebastian, the office of *falcoeiro-mor* (master falconer) had been one of the most prestigious court offices, but due to the personal union with Spain and John IV's lack of interest for falconry the position was no longer occupied. Yet, in 1752, a dozen Dutch falconers from Valkenswaard arrived and brought falconry back to new heights at the Braganza court, orchestrated by an ambitious leading minister, the marquis de Pombal, and headed by a *mestre falcoeiro* who was responsible for the new falconry in Salvaterra de Magos—a late flourishing of the courtly art of hunting with birds in a time when Europe's second golden age of falconry had already passed its apogee.[137]

However, not all courts employed a high-ranking master falconer. Despite its essential role in the distribution of Nordic gyrfalcons in Europe, the Danish court did not maintain a separate office for the head of the royal falconry. Instead, the master of the hunt (*Overjægermester*) was usually also the main representative of the king's falconry, with Dutch falcon masters running the daily business. In the eighteenth century, the office of *Overjægermester* was subsequently held by Friedrich von Gramm (1664–1741) and his son Carl Christian von Gramm (1703–1780) who combined their duties as royal hunters with several other court offices and honours.[138] However, because of their relatively low rank of birth, they were only addressed as '*Monsieur*' in the letters of their colleagues from Vienna and Versailles. It was only after Gramm's death that Count Christian Frederik von Holstein (1758–1828) became master of the hunt, whereas the chamberlain Charles Louis de Bosc de la Calmette (1750–1811), who had a similar status profile, was named supreme falcon master (*Overfalkenmester*)—which meant an increase in status for both hunting organizations.

Subjected to the social logics of Europe's court society, the master falconers had to pay more attention to their relationships with the sovereign and with other courtiers than to the animals that belonged to their team. Nevertheless, their 'good knowledge and experience acquired in falconry' that were frequently evoked in promotion letters were more than an inane reference to a meritocratic

[135] Martínez Millán/Labrador Arroyo, 'La pervivencia de la casa de Castilla: la caza', pp. 1045–92; Martínez Millán, 'La reforma de las casas reales', pp. 83–9.

[136] Luzzi Traficante, 'La caza de la monarquía de los Borbones', p. 116.

[137] See Batista Leite, *Falcoaria Real*, pp. 28–9; Beata Neves, 'Subsídios para a história da falcoaria'; Fradejas Rueda, 'Falconry on the Iberian Peninsula', p. 1206; and the documentation in DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.643, containing letters exchanged between the Portuguese and Danish representatives in The Hague who mediated the sending of gyrfalcons to Portugal.

[138] See the information in the *Danks Biografisk Leksikon* (https://biografiskleksikon.lex.dk, accessed 25 January 2021).

discourse.[139] The master falconers held final responsibility for the overall performance of the princely falconry. Hence, archival records show that the emperor's *Obristfalkenmeister* and their European colleagues were personally involved in the purchase of new birds, the hiring or promotion of falconers, and the organization of the hunting spectacles. Perhaps most importantly, they had to be experienced enough to fulfil ceremonial duties during the hunt, such as handing over the falcon to the king or presenting him with the prey, and commenting the course of the animal battles high up in the sky. The accumulated expertise of the Desmarets, Forget, and Saint Julien families—some of whom also kept falconries on their own grounds—was therefore another good reason for keeping them in office in the eighteenth century when falconry knowledge among court nobles tended to vanish.

The master falconers also communicated with their colleagues on a European scale. From Copenhagen, the Danish *Overjægermester* or *Overfalkenmester* exchanged courtly letters with the high-ranking people in charge and with individual courtiers in Vienna, Munich, and Kassel, London, Versailles, and Lisbon, announcing new gyrfalcons from Iceland, accepting orders, expressing thanks for counter-gifts, or assuring their correspondents that the respective foreign prince would get a better share of the annual catching next time.[140] Often the prose of the incoming letters from foreign courts remained rather impersonal and flowerily. Desmarets and Forget told their Danish colleague every year that the Nordic gyrfalcons had caused 'great pleasure' to King Louis XV, who in fact almost never practised falconry.[141] Yet, in letters from courts with passionate falconers, the correspondence could also become more specific and more emotional. In 1734, for example, Brandenburg-Ansbach's Master Falconer von Pöllnitz lamented the death of five gyrfalcons shortly after their arrival—a clear sign to his Danish counterpart that compensation was expected next time to comfort the margrave who was portrayed as an 'extraordinary lover of such birds'.[142]

Sometimes, the master falconers also shared their expertise, discussing details about the falcons' origins, qualities, or performance. In a long letter to the *Overfalkenmester* De la Calmette, dated Versailles, 18 April 1784, for instance, the marquis de Forget asked for detailed information about the origins of and differences between different types of Nordic falcons, which he wanted to use for a

[139] 'Oberst-Falkenmeister-Dekret für Johann Albert von St. Julien', Vienna, 18 January 1712, ed. in St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, pp. 29–30.

[140] See the rich correspondence in DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.633–39 and 643–48.

[141] See, e.g., Desmarets to Gram, Versailles, 7 November 1741, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.643, Lit. Xi, no. 2.

[142] See Pöllnitz to Gram, Onolzbach, 16 June 1734, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.638, remembering the sad fate of last year's five falcons who had died ('miteinander crepiret') within six or seven weeks, 'so höchst gedacht Ihre HFHt: als einem ganz ausserordentlichen Liebhaber dergleichen Vögel, sehr nahe gegangen'.

short account on falconry.[143] But even such 'technical' exchanges remained deeply marked by the codes of courtly rationality. In the same letter from April 1784, Forget reminded his Danish colleague that his charge as head of the king's cabinet falconry was 'one of the first ranks at court'. According to Forget, his responsibility for active flights, combined with the office's ceremonial privileges and the fact that it had been held over five generations by his family, were clear signs for the cabinet falconry's precedence over the *Grande Fauconnerie*. He should therefore also be considered for the next sending of gyrfalcons from Iceland.[144] Writing about birds of prey was thus a way of negotiating social position at court and in European court society.

This chapter has shown that in seventeenth-century Europe, falconry gradually lost its function as a noble hunting practice and turned into a courtly spectacle. The beginning of this 'second golden age of falconry' went hand in hand with the creation of a complicated European logistics that helped to exchange birds, knowledge, and professional falconers. Some noblemen used the favour achieved by falconry to establish themselves and their families at court by playing their roles in these spectacles. Some of them were even able to use the especially high-ranking offices of master falconers as a resource to gain more social, economic, and symbolic capital. Yet, for most members of the European power elites, trained raptors—in contrast to horses or dogs—vanished from their daily life. Only occasionally, if at all, they would now follow falcon hunts at the court that had been carefully arranged behind the scenes to present a powerful image of royal sovereignty. The next chapter will discuss the role of the kings or queens and princes in the whole machinery that kept ambitious people moving and trained raptors flying.

Rulers and Raptors: Falcons in Courtly Europe, 1600–1793. Nadir Weber, Oxford University Press.
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[143] Forget to Monsieur [De la Calmette], Versailles, 18 April 1784, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.647.

[144] Ibid. As we can learn from this letter, the gift falcons for the French king were still handed over to the *grand fauconnier* even though it was the cabinet's falconry that then took care of them.

5
Performing Royalty

In 1720, Gottfried Rühlmann (d. 1742), a court historiographer of King George I of Great Britain and Ireland, published a treatise in which he claimed his master's rights to the position of the Holy Roman Empire's Arch-Falconer ('*Ertz-Falckner des H. Römischen Reichs*').[1] The treatise addressed the much-debated question of which honorary imperial office should be attached to the recently established Electorate of Hannover that was ruled in personal union by the king. For Rühlmann, who traced the imperial office back to the '*Magnus Franciae Falconarius*' at the court of Charlemagne, the Empire's Arch-Falconer would not only be of equal rank to the Arch-Treasurer (Duke of Bavaria) or the Arch-Chamberlain (Margrave of Brandenburg). The office would also put George in one line with the ancient Holy Roman Emperors who had placed figures of hawks on their coins and seals and thus—according to Rühlmann—had presented themselves as the empire's chief falconers:

> Therefore, it is obvious that it [i.e. the office of Arch-Falconer] should be accorded to a great potentate, who has rendered outstanding services to His Imperial Majesty and the Holy Roman Empire, and continues to do so, and whose aim is to grant peace, security, and pleasure to all of Europe.[2]

Given this pretentious argumentation, it is not surprising that the other German rulers did not agree with this proposition. Especially the Elector of Saxony, who claimed the office of the Empire's Arch-Master of the Hunt (*Erzjägermeister*) for himself, was not at all amused by Rühlmann's proposition and opposed the creation of a hereditary imperial office of Arch-Falconer or Arch-Master Falconer for the elector of Hanover.[3] Even if Rühlmann's plan was not implemented in the end, the discussion nevertheless illustrates the highly symbolic value of falconry in Baroque Europe, especially in the context of the early eighteenth-century Holy Roman Empire. The practice of falconry was so closely connected to royalty that Europe's rulers created large falconries, ordered their court painters to portray them with gyrfalcons on their fist, and tried to organize the most successful and spectacular aerial hunts at their court. This chapter will show how rulers were

[1] Rühlmann, *Allerunterthänigste Anzeigung eines Reichs-Ertz-Amtes zur Neunten Chur* (1720), quote p. 10.
[2] Ibid., p. 17.
[3] See Rößig, *Abhandlung über die Reichs-Erz-Ämter* (1803), pp. 116–18.

involved in the practice of courtly falconry and why the hunt with trained raptors became such a powerful metaphor for Baroque rulership.

5.1 Sovereignty in the Sky: The French Falconer-Kings

Situated at the top of a God-given social hierarchy, early modern rulers had to excel in activities that allowed the nobility to demonstrate its superiority to people of other social strata. Besides knowing genealogies, speaking foreign languages, and showing military skills, the animal-related practices of riding and hunting were among the basic competences that princes learnt from an early age onwards and usually practised regularly until the end of their life.[4] Compared to the Middle Ages, these activities had lost much of their practical use. Riding on horseback became increasingly superfluous with the rise of the state coaches as preferred princely means of transportation from the late sixteenth century onwards, and the meat of game animals was less appreciated at table than the meat of domestic livestock that was kept in the immediate surroundings of the residences. Yet, the sovereigns' personal interactions with animals remained important at the level of symbolic representation. They showed the rulers' ability to command and to control themselves and others; they exemplified the mechanisms of a well-ordered hierarchical society; and they shaped the royal body physically, through strenuous training, and symbolically, by association.[5]

In this section, I will use the example of the French King Louis XIII (1601/r.1610–1643) to show how rulers' interactions with captive birds of prey contributed to the making of royalty in Baroque Europe. Historiography has given only scarce attention to Louis XIII compared to the strong figures of his father, his cardinal-minister, and his son.[6] For the political history of falconry, however, the second Bourbon played a key role because he became the prototype of the early modern flying sovereign, or falconer-king. As a ruler, Louis XIII not only practised falconry regularly and employed it for portraying himself as a capable leader. Inspired by the principles of human–raptor interaction, he also developed a style of rulership in which a new understanding of sovereignty manifested itself.

The first encounters between Louis and captive birds of prey can be traced back to the early childhood of the future king of France. According to Louis' physician and educator, Jean Héroard, the dauphin learnt his first lessons in hunting in 1603, at the age of two, when he was taken to the fields to watch courtly

[4] For various examples, see Hengerer/Weber, eds, *Animals and Courts*.

[5] On the significance of the early modern ruler on horseback, see esp. Liedtke, *The Royal Horse and Rider*; Roche, *La gloire et la puissance*; Bayreuther, *Pferde und Fürsten*; and Papiro, *Choreographie der Herrschaft*.

[6] In contrast to Henri IV, Richelieu, and Louis XIV, there is no recent biography of Louis XIII with the exception of Jean-Christian Petitfils' *Louis XIII* (2014).

hunts and began to perform simple exercises with small dogs.[7] At about the same time, the young prince began to develop a particular interest in birds. In August 1604, Héroard noted that he had shown Louis his illustrated copy of Conrad Gessner's natural history of birds.[8] In February 1605, the courtier Jean Baron d'Harambure visited the three-year-old dauphin with a raptor on his fist.[9] Only a little later, the physician reported that '*Monsieur*' loved to talk with the king's falconers.[10] In August 1607 at the latest, Louis began to fly a trained shrike on sparrows and domestic birds in the galleries of the châteaux and sparrow hawks on partridges in parks—years before his first encounter with Charles d'Albert de Luynes, his future falconer and favourite.[11]

Such early princely interactions with raptors were not uncommon at European courts around 1600. Small birds of prey, as well as songbirds, often appear on portraits of young members of royal families (Figure 5.1).[12] In some cases, the children were depicted holding a bird with a cord, a reference to a widespread children's game that prepared young noblemen for the practice of falconry.[13] According to Héroard, who published a treatise entitled *De l'institution du prince* in 1609, playful interactions with birds or small dogs were actually more than necessary exercises for body and mind. Their purpose was to accustom the young prince to the practice of governing his subjects and leading his soldiers.[14] Discussing the best method of governing in an environment of ambitious elites, the dauphin's physician and educator struck the same chord as contemporary falconry and hunting treatises when he observed that playing with the others' interests was much more effective than the use of force:

> Having observed that there is nothing among men that obliges them more than seeing themselves being loved and seeing [others] loving the same things that are pleasant for them, and who therefore serve them assiduously, like the pointer dogs after having taken the game, … they consider that complaisance is the only proper method for establishing oneself as master.[15]

[7] Foisil, 'Introduction générale', p. 118.
[8] Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 1, p. 506, 12 August 1604.
[9] Ibid., p. 593, 10 February 1605.
[10] Ibid., p. 1197, 11 April 1607. On the various roles of birds in the education of Louis XIII, see also Fabre, 'Une enfance de roi'.
[11] Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 1, p. 1283, 18 August 1607, and p. 186, 23 August 1607 ('pie-grièche'), p. 187, 23 August 1607 ('espervier'). On De Luynes, see above, Chapter 4.2.
[12] On princely portraits with raptors and the Habsburg courts, see also Scheichl, 'Cammerhundt', pp. 12–13.
[13] See Brednich, 'Vogel am Faden'. On the role of birds in children's education and their representation in images, see also Breittruck, *Ein Flügelschlag in der Pariser Aufklärung*, pp. 72–3.
[14] See Héroard, *De l'institution du prince* (1609), pp. 55–6. On the practice of princely education in France, see Mormiche, *Devenir prince*.
[15] Héroard, *De l'institution du prince* (1609), pp. 80–1. The sentence discusses the role of courtiers ('*galands*') but also refers to general insights on how to influence the behaviour of others. On the

Figure 5.1 Portrait of King James VI of Scotland in 1574, after Arnold van Bronckhorst, oil on canvas, *c.*1592. This portrait, of which several copies exist, depicts the future King James I of England as an eight-year-old boy-prince holding a small raptor—presumably a sparrowhawk—on his fist
Source: Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, inv. no. 1129115/National Trust Collections.

In the case of Louis XIII, these early lessons in leading oneself and others were soon moved onto the public stage. After the assassination of his father, King Henri IV, on 14 May 1610, the responsibilities for the daily government lay in the hands

concepts and practices of princely education in the early seventeenth century, see Flandrois, *L'institution du prince*, esp. p. 220.

of the queen mother and her ministers. However, the evolving royal propaganda insisted even more on the young king's ability to attract followers and to command them, shown publically in the interaction with horses, birds, and other species. Already one day after his father's death, the not-yet-nine-year-old boy-king presented himself to the public, gravely riding on horseback. In October of the same year, Louis XIII entered Reims, led a long *cavalcade*—a public procession of noblemen on horses—and re-entered Paris on the back of a white horse in the context of the *sacre* ceremonies.[16] And a few years later, Antoine de Pluvinel celebrated the young king's outstanding learning ability and mastery of horses in his famous equestrian treatise *La Maneige Royale*.[17] At the same time, under the tutoring of his cabinet falconer, Charles d'Albert de Luynes, Louis further developed his skills in training birds of prey. According to Heorard's diary, the young king let his merlin falcons fly on small birds in the gardens several times a week and regularly practised falconry on partridges and other game animals in the region of Paris.[18] Surrounded by the falconers of the newly created cabinet falconry and praised by well-known falconry authors such as Charles d'Arcussia, the young king soon gained a reputation throughout Europe as an outstanding falconer who even developed new hunting methods himself.

While the youthful king's almost excessive falconry activities might initially have appeared as a compensation for his exclusion from government business, their continuation after the *coup de majesté* of 1617 made it clear that, for the second Bourbon king, hunting and governing were closely related. During his rides in the surrounding countryside of Paris, the king could regularly be seen carrying 'a big falcon on his fist, the wind in his face and the rain on his shoulders.'[19] In doing so, he expressed far more than a personal passion for hunting. Like a tableau vivant, Louis and his horses, hounds, and hawks staged a classic symbol of rulership established since medieval times. After the turmoil of the civil wars and the regency, the king thus expressed his intention to reclaim and control the royal territory.

Yet, the frequent practice of falconry at Louis' court was much more than a nostalgic reference to outdated medieval chivalry traditions. While the *chasse à courre* with horses and dogs, additionally secured by the creation of hunting domains, 'projected and enlarged the image of the king's body' onto the territory,[20] the flying birds of prey symbolically extended it into the airspace. This claim was underlined by the increasing practice of hunting in high flight at Louis' court, with the falcons circling high up in the sky in order to attack their prey from above. At a time when erudite authors published treatises about the *ars*

[16] See Foisil, 'Introduction générale', p. 123, and on the significance of riding in Louis' education, Drévillon, 'Le roi-cavalier'.
[17] Franchet d'Espèrey, 'The Ballet d'Antoine de Pluvinel'.
[18] Foisil, 'Introduction générale', pp. 124–7.
[19] Héroard, *Journal*, vol. 2, p. 2669, 17 February 1620.
[20] See Salvadori, *La chasse*, esp. p. 215; Schmidt, *Jagd und Herrschaft*; Merlotti, ed., *Le cacce reali*.

volandi, presenting birds as models, and some novels even imagined a flight to the moon with a sailing vessel-like apparatus pulled by trained geese,[21] the high flight with falcons could also be read as a symbolic vehicle for 'futurist' projections of airspace control. Falcons acted both as loyal servants and symbolic representatives for the French king who extended his ambitions of sovereignty into the third dimension. Consequently, Louis XIII was also accompanied by his falcons during his military campaigns.[22]

Besides being a symbol of rulership and control, falconry also stood for the ruler's offer of a cooperative relationship with the noble elites. Hence, contemporary observers drew analogies between the handling of birds of prey and the king's offer of large pensions and high offices to rebellious magnates in order to bring them and their clients back to court. In 1621, a fierce critic of De Luynes argued that the government of the province of Guyenne had only been offered to the king's brother, Gaston d'Orléans, in order 'to lure' people to the royal court.[23] Overall, the king and his ministerial brokers aimed at integrating his noblemen into their project of the monarchical state through material and symbolic incentives. Violence should only be used as a last resort combating those members of the nobility or other subjects who had repeatedly and openly shown resistance to the monarchy.[24] To some extent—and with varying degrees of success—Louis XIII and his advisors thus applied the basic methods of animal training to their relationships with the kingdom's elites.

Finally, in monarchical propaganda, the close association between the king and his animals also served to underscore the ruler's personal charisma—similar to the alleged healing of scrofula through the laying on of hands following the *sacre* ritual.[25] In April 1612, during the solemnities that were held on the Place Royale in Paris to celebrate Louis' engagement with the Spanish Infanta Anne of Austria, a great number of horses, exotic animals, and birds surrounded the young ruler and his future spouse. According to the official description published in the *Mercure de France*, 'an infinity of nightingales and other small birds' that had been released flew voluntarily 'onto the stage of Their Majesties…, and being tired of flying accepted to be taken.'[26] In a similar way, alluding to biblical stories

[21] Behringer/Ott-Koptschalijski, *Der Traum vom Fliegen*, ch. 4.

[22] Even more than a century later, the obligation to accompany the sovereign during military campaigns was seen as one of the major duties or privileges of the *fauconnerie du Cabinet du roi*; see Newton, *La petite cour*, p. 90.

[23] [Langlois de Fancan,] *La Chronique des Favoris* (1621), p. 46. In the French language, the falconry term 'to lure' (*leurrer*) only acquired the autonomous metaphorical meaning of deceiving with false promises later, in the course of the seventeenth century. The *Thresor de la langue francoyse* of 1606 still associated the term firstly with falcons and secondly with the education of young men. See *Dictionnaires d'autrefois*, 'leurrer'.

[24] See Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients*, using the lure metaphor on pp. 159 and 175.

[25] Asch, *Sacral Kingship*, esp. pp. 28–33.

[26] *Mercure françois*, tome 2, 1612, 'Carrousel à Paris en Rejouissance du Mariage de Louis 13. Roy de France et L'infante d'Espagne; et de celuy du Prince d'Espagne et Madame Sœur du Roy', here quoted after the transcript in AN, O^1, 3264.

about the infant Jesus' attraction to birds, the falconry author Charles d'Arcussia later told his readers that when the young King Louis XIII went outside to the Tuileries gardens, kinglets, redbreasts, sparrows, and other small birds 'competed for finding a place on his hand.'[27] According to the same author, the fourteen-year-old king's personal qualities in handling his raptors resembled a divine miracle, too: 'you can say with sincerity that there is no falconer in the world who could teach him something in this art.'[28] D'Arcussia thus not only heralded a golden age of courtly falconry in France but also placed the person of the king himself at the centre of this turnaround:

> It seems that the king has a secret influence on birds and an unknown power over humans. Honestly, he not only loves them with great affection, but is also infinitely skilful in handling them, be it by luring them, be it by making them fly—something that cannot be described by words.[29]

After the sudden death of Louis XIII on 14 May 1643, the established governmental system was fundamentally challenged as the next king, Louis XIV, was only four years old and, like his father thirty years earlier, had to be represented by his mother and her ministers. It was therefore all the more important to emphasize the continuity of charismatic qualities and the special aptitude of the infant-king for ruling in order to secure the continuation of the Bourbon dynasty. In this context, a copperplate etching circulated showing the late king in the pose of a commander on horseback while his falcons attack a heron high up in the sky (Figure 5.2). The legend below describes the 'invincible' Louis XIII as an 'absolute monarch' and the 'greatest king in the world' who had combined military exploits in the Thirty Years War with his successful campaigns against internal 'rebels'. Around the same time, another engraving was produced with royal privilege showing the boy-king Louis XIV in a similar pose, with a small hooded falcon—probably a merlin—on his fist (Figure 5.3). In the caption of this etching, the young sovereign was compared to Alexander as a tamer of the horse Bucephalus. It is to be expected, the caption continues, that this king will soon show his courage on the battlefields and present himself as 'conqueror of the world like all Caesars'. Accordingly, the wild birds are shown in panic flight, while the second falcon is being unleashed by a royal falconer. On the eve of the *Fronde*, the imaginary of falconry thus served as a medium through which the royal propaganda emphasized the dynastic continuity of rulership.

[27] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy', *La Fauconnerie* (1644 edn), p. 170. On the analogies with Jesus, see Fabre, 'Une enfance de roi', p. 401.
[28] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy' (1615), *La Fauconnerie* (1644 edn), p. 163.
[29] Ibid., p. 169. On d'Arcussia and his relations to the crown, see above, Chapter 4.1.

Tel que fut autres-fois, monté sur Bucefal
Le Monarque absolu de la terre, et de l'onde;
Tel, et plus aguerry, se tient vous à cheual,
Inuincible Louys, le plus grand Roy du Monde.
Que ne deuons-nous pas à ses exploits diuers,
Qui des Rebelllons ont dissipé l'orage!
Le seul bruit de son Nom estonne l'vniuers,
Et n'est point de Valeur esgale à son Courage.
I. Falck. fecit
a Paris chez le blond peintre ord.re du Roy demeurant rue S.t Denis a la pomme dor deuant les filles penitentes auec Priuilege

Figure 5.2 Equestrian portrait of King Louis XIII, etching by Jeremiasz Falck, after 1643. In the upper-right background of this equestrian portrait, an aerial confrontation between the royal falcons and a heron can be discerned
Source: BnF Gallica, id. no. ark:/12148/btv1b84040091.

Lors que pour sa donner aux plaisirs de la Chasse
Lovys commencera de monter a Cheual:
Il aura deuant tous plus dadresse et de grace
Qu'Alexandre n'en eust a dompter Bucephal
Huart geeu auec priuilege du Roy
Mais il est bien certain qu'en la fleur de son âge
Armé sur vn Courtier dedans le Champ de Mars
Il feira plus dexploits dignes de son Courage
Que ce Veinceur du Monde est que tous les Cesars

Figure 5.3 Equestrian portrait of King Louis XIV, etching by Huart, *c.*1645. The well-known oil painting by Juste d'Egmont—arguably the first equestrian portrait of the future Sun King—served as the model for this engraving. The caption and the visual reference to the similar portraits of the king's parents reinforced the portrait's propagandistic function

Source: From Auguste Compte de Chabot, *La chasse à travers les âges*, Paris, Savaète, 1898, p. 166/BnF Gallica, ark:/12148/bpt6k1025211r.

In the following decades, falconry remained an important metaphor for sovereignty and dynastic power. Thus, when Adam Frans van der Meulen represented Louis XIV as a commander of a falconry party in Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1669, he depicted the latter in a posture that conspicuously resembles his representation of the Sun King as a military commander in the monumental war paintings of the Dutch War, realized some years later.[30] Although there are no known later portraits of Louis XIV as a falconer (unlike that of his granddaughter-in-law, the Duchess of Burgundy), the Sun King continued to practise this hunt at the court of Versailles. If the court's most diligent diarist, the Marquis de Dangeau, frequently noted that the king had 'gone flying' ('*alla voler*'),[31] this still echoed the idea that the trained falcons wearing rings with the anagram of the ruler also acted as an extension of the royal body high up in the sky.

The first two Bourbon kings were not the only European sovereigns who staged themselves as falconers in the seventeenth century. As mentioned above, courtly falconry flourished under King James I of England, who even engaged in a kind of falconry competition with Louis XIII, and was constantly practised in Austria and Spain. All over Europe, male and female sovereigns—such as Queen Christina of Sweden—also had themselves portrayed on horseback with their falcons.[32] However, the French court falconries were by far the largest in Europe during the *grand siècle*. Accordingly, the French court also served as a model in this symbolic field, which was partially adapted by other courts without achieving the same magnitude. This allowed the French kings to evoke the whole spectrum of associations of territorial sovereignty, cooperative rulership, personal charisma, and European precedence in situational courtly falcon hunts. In February 1699, the *Mercure galant* proudly reported that the foreign ambassadors had unanimously described a large falconry in Saint-Denis as 'truly royal'.[33]

Falconry at the French court also impressed visiting foreign princes. Among them was Elector Maximilian II Emanuel of Bavaria, who spent long periods in exile on the Île-de-France during the War of the Spanish Succession and attended several falconry hunts at Versailles, which he described with admiration in in letters to his brother.[34] A few decades later, however, the German princes would

[30] See Richefort, *Adam-François van der Meulen*, p. 21.

[31] See, e.g., Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. 2, p. 387 (Marly, 5 May 1689). The same expression ('*alla voler*') is used at various other occasions documenting the same years; see ibid., pp. 42 (11 and 13 May 1687), 112–13 (24 and 28 February, 2 March 1688), 116–25 (6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 24, 27, and 30 March 1688), 338–9 (25 and 26 February 1689), 348 (8 March 1689), 352 (15 March 1689), 357 (21 March 1689), 375–8, 383 (16, 19, 21, and 29 April 1689), and 387 (5 May 1689).

[32] On Queen Christina's portrait as a falconer by Sébastien Bourdon, see Weber, 'Von Fürstinnen und Terzeln', p. 40.

[33] *Mercure galant*, February 1699, p. 214.

[34] See Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. 15, pp. 121–2 (7 and 10 April 1714). See also Salvadori, *La chasse*, p. 200, who, however, slightly underestimates the frequency of falcon hunts at the French court after 1700; on the Elector's stay at Versailles and its impact on Bavarian court culture, see Krems, *Die Wittelsbacher und Europa*, p. 85.

have turned from attentive recipients into primary models of European courtly falconry culture. In his article for the *Encyclopédie*, published in 1756, Charles-Georges Leroy noted that while the king of France still maintained a 'very brilliant' falconry, this form of hunting was by now much more intensively practised among the princes in Germany.[35] The following section will explore how and why the Holy Roman Empire became the main arena for falconry in eighteenth-century Europe.

5.2 Falconry and the Run for Royalty in Germany

After the Peace of Westphalia, the Holy Roman Empire had become a scene of intense dynastic status competition.[36] In the context of a consolidating European system of powers, the leading German princely houses strove for full sovereignty. Receiving the *honores regii*—the 'honours of a king'—became a primary goal in the electors' and other imperial princes' foreign policy.[37] Because there were no royal crowns to be gained within the empire apart from the titles of king and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, this competition among the German princely dynasties for royal status had repercussions throughout neighbouring Europe. The intense election campaign of the House of Saxony in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was crowned with success in 1697, the elevation of the former Duchy of Prussia to a kingdom, which brought the House of Brandenburg the royal title in 1701, or the establishment of the House of Hanover as kings of Great Britain in 1714 can be interpreted as effects of this intensified status competition among German princes.

In this context, big game hunting and falconry also became important means of symbolic communication in this run for royalty. According to the authors of 'ceremonial science', these types of hunting required both legal prerogatives and substantial financial means, which made them a princely business. In his seminal work on 'The German Princely State', first published in 1656, Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff (1626–1692), privy councillor at the court of Saxony-Gotha, argued that specialist knowhow and investments were necessary to set up 'falcon houses'. Thus, only 'great lords' ('*grosse Herren*') were able to engage falcon masters, acquire trained raptors, and establish game parks to practise falconry.[38] Descriptions such as those by Seckendorff were put into practice by many of the

[35] Charles-Georges Leroy, art. 'Fauconnerie', *Encyclopédie*, ed. Diderot/D'Alembert, vol. 6 (1756), p. 430.

[36] On the Holy Roman Empire as a symbolic construction and *theatrum preaecedentia*, see Stollberg-Rilinger, *The Emperor's Old Clothes*. Some of the following observations on falconry as a field of status competition can also be found in my article Weber, '*Elatus tendet in altum*'.

[37] Stollberg-Rilinger, '*Honores regii*'; Krischer, 'Souveränität als sozialer Status'.

[38] Seckendorff, *Teutscher Fürsten Stat* (1656), p. 200. On this discourse, see Vec, *Zeremonialwissenschaft im Fürstenstaat*, and Bauer, *Hofökonomie*.

expanding German courts. The princes reactivated existing falconries, some of which had fallen into disuse during the Thirty Years War, or gave orders to build new houses and recruited new staff—falconers and birds—from abroad.

Already in the last years of the war, ambitious imperial princes started to rebuild their falconries and stage themselves as falconer-princes in the tradition of Louis XIII. One of them was Frederick William of Brandenburg (r. 1640–88) who regularly sent his falconers Johann and Jacob Bienen to the Netherlands in order to acquire great numbers of precious gyrfalcons from the North.[39] Simultaneously, Duke Christian Ludwig of Brunswick-Lüneburg (r. 1641/8–55) commissioned a series of eight large-format paintings showing him and his court practicing falconry (Figure 5.4).[40] At this time, portraits of both male and female members of ruling houses with white gyrfalcons became popular throughout courtly Germany. They underlined royal claims to rank as well as—in the case of Christian Ludwig's sister Sophie Amalie (1628–1685), Queen of Denmark—the purity of their dynastic 'race' (Figure 5.5).[41] In this visual propaganda, not only the falcons became whiter than they were in nature. The depiction of the princes themselves was also modelled on the birds, soaring high into the sky like their political ambitions. This trend reached a new level in the 1680s, when the growing importance of falconry also began to have a visible impact on court architecture. A telling example for this development can be found in Schleißheim near Munich, where the Bavarian Elector Maximilian II Emanuel (r. 1679–1726) commissioned the construction of the château Lustheim in 1685.[42] In the pompous banqueting hall at Lustheim, the 'Blue Elector' celebrated himself as the commander of great courtly falcon hunts with white gyrfalcons in large-format paintings by the Italian court painter Giovanni Battista Curlando.[43] In this way, he competed with his father-in-law, Emperor Leopold I, who had the old castle of Laxenburg near Vienna transformed into a landscape–architecture ensemble dedicated to the hunt with trained raptors in the very same year in which Maximilian had ordered the construction of his hunting château.[44]

This symbolic competition in the field of falconry architecture and practice must be seen in the context of the growing rivalry between the Houses of Austria and Bavaria within the Holy Roman Empire and on a European scale. The Bavarian Wittelsbachs—electors only since 1623—had not only become the

[39] GStAPK, I. HA, Rep. 36, no. 2333. In July 1644, for instance, Jacob Bienen purchased twenty gyrfalcons for the duke and elector.

[40] The paintings were first displayed in Herzberg Palace, the widow's residence of Christian Ludwig's mother, and in 1708, they were integrated into the so-called falcon room (*Falkenzimmer*) in Herrenhausen Castle near Hanover. See Laß, 'Hannover-Herrenhausen, Schloss'.

[41] On the representation of race in courtly contexts, see Bevilacqua, 'Race-Making Festivities'.

[42] On the construction of Lustheim castle, see Schmid, *Schloss Schleißheim*, pp. 51–76; on the elector's expanding falconry, Seidenader, *Kulturgeschichte der Falknerei*, vol. 3, pp. 1366–628.

[43] See Glaser, ed., *Kurfürst Max Emanuel*, vol. 1, p. 178, and vol. 2, p. 1.

[44] On the architecture of Laxenburg, see above, Chapter 3.1, pp. 66–8.

Figure 5.4 Portrait of Duke Christian Ludwig of Brunswick-Lüneburg, Prince of Calenberg, oil on canvas, *c.*1650. The identical head positions, including the depiction of the nose and beak, create a remarkable visual analogy between the ruler and his raptor, which is even further emphasized by the falcon's hood on the duke's hat
Source: Residenzmuseum im Celler Schloss, photo by Studio Loeper, Celle.

Habsburgs' closest competitors for the imperial crown; Maximilian II Emanuel also sought to position his house for the impeding Spanish succession.[45] However, the premature death of Joseph Ferdinand Leopold of Bavaria, prince of Asturia, in 1699 spoiled the Wittelsbachs' royal aspirations. Subsequently, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13/14) halted the expansion of courtly falconry not only in the occupied territory of Bavaria, but also in Austria and other German states. Due to the prolonged absence of the sovereigns and because of financial constraints, many of the court falconries were reduced or even temporarily closed.[46]

[45] See Glaser, ed., *Kurfürst Max Emanuel*, 2 vols.
[46] For instance, the princely falconry was temporarily abolished at the court of Württemberg in 1702, while the electors of Bavaria and Cologne were forced to go into exile, where they sometimes

Figure 5.5 Portrait of Sophie Amalie of Brunswick-Calenberg, Queen of Denmark, by Abraham Wuchters, oil on canvas, *c.*1670. In this portrait, the posture and colour of the falcon and the queen correspond, while the black servant holding the falcon serves as a visual contrast. As the spouse of King Frederick III of Denmark, Queen Sophie Amalie was able to influence to which princes the highly desired Icelandic gyrfalcons were given

Source: Frederiksborg Castle, Museum of National History, inv.-no. A 4605.

After the peace treaties of Utrecht and Baden, however, a new wave of enthusiasm for courtly falconry swept through the Holy Roman Empire. In this period, the competition between Habsburg and Wittelsbach intensified again because of the absence of a male successor in the House of Austria. After his return to

engaged new falconers on the spot; it was re-established in 1710. See, e.g., LNRWD, Abt. Rheinland, AA 0007: Kurköln II, no. 856.

Austria, Emperor Charles VI (r. 1711–40) began to host pompous falcon hunts every spring in Laxenburg, inviting foreign princes and their representatives whom he wished to convince of his 'pragmatic sanction'.[47] The Wittelsbachs did not hold back and demonstrated their potency and unity with the expansion of their falconries. In Bavaria, the hunting castle of Lichtenberg on the Lech—richly decorated with falcon portraits and hunting paintings—became a primary site of heron hunts,[48] while the elector of Cologne, Maximilian's son August I of Bavaria (r. 1723–61), hired falconers from the Netherlands and gave orders to construct the castle of Falkenlust ('falcon's pleasure') near Brühl in 1729. In several commissioned paintings that became part of the permanent inventory of the castle, the elector was portrayed as a falconer with white gyrfalcons on his fist (Figure 5.6).[49]

The symbolic competition between the two leading Catholic German dynasties not only manifested itself in magnificent hunting castles and pictorial programmes, but also in the hunting statistics of their falcons, which were meticulously recorded in hunting diaries and occasionally published in courtly periodicals. On 23 June 1731, for example, the *Wienerisches Diarium* reported that 'the reigning imperial court finished the heron hunt at Laxenburg' on 21 June, where a total of '303 animals, namely 113 herons, 28 hares, 53 magpies, 38 crows, 42 wild ducks, 13 rollers, 41 ravens, 2 vultures and 24 kites were caught and felled'.[50] Over the years, the perfectly organized imperial falconry in Laxenburg with its large number of gyrfalcons clearly emerged as a winner from this symbolic contest, reflected in particular in the number of herons, the most prestigious prey that was always mentioned first. Whereas between 1715 and 1725, the falcons of the Bavarian Elector Maximilian II Emanuel brought down 325 herons, those of Emperor Charles VI caught 1,166 herons between 1717 and 1726, or more than one hundred herons every spring.[51]

Other German princely houses reacted in different ways to this increased competition on the falconry battlefield. Many larger German courts participated in the movement by moderately expanding their falconries. As early as 1710, the duke of Württemberg wanted to splendidly re-establish his falconry in Kaltenthal, a plan that was only partially realized after 1714 for financial reasons.[52] At the court of Saxony, the new office of a *Falknereihauptmann* ('captain of the falconry')

[47] See Sulzbeck, *Jägerei und Falknerei*, pp. 42–3; Mitis, *Jagd und Schützen am Hof Karls VI.*, pp. 37–40; Seitschek, *Die Tagebücher Kaiser Karls VI.*, p. 316.

[48] Simonsfeld, 'Eine bayerische Gemäldesammlung', based on an inventory of 1761. Lichtenberg castle was demolished in 1806, which is why the collection has not been preserved in its entirety.

[49] See Seidenader, *Kulturgeschichte der Falknerei*, vol. 3, pp. 1650–8, 1907–38; Hansmann, *Schloss Falkenlust*, pp. 8–28; Beckers, 'Die kurkölnische Falknerei'.

[50] *Wienerisches Diarium*, no. 50 (1731), 23 June 1731.

[51] The numbers are based on HHStA, HA, Sammelbände 2, 'Eigenhändige Abschuss-Tabellen Kaiser Karls VI.', and Seidenader, *Kulturgeschichte der Falknerei*, vol. 3, pp. 1734–5. In total, the emperors' falcons caught 3,260 game animals in this period (326 on average).

[52] See the rich documentation in HStAS, A5 Bü 83, A 248 Bü 387, and A 282 Bü 1206/2.

Figure 5.6 Portrait of Clemens August I of Bavaria, Elector of Cologne, by Peter Jakob Horemans, *c.*1732. This portrait is part of a larger series depicting various members of the House of Wittelsbach as falconers. In the case of Clemens August, dynastic representation was prioritized over his status as head of an ecclesiastical state
Source: Falkenlust Castle near Brühl/Verwaltung Schlösser Brühl, photo by Horst Gummersbach.

was created in 1727 and additional falconers and birds were hired to serve at the falconry in Kalkreuth.[53] In the same year, the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel enlarged

[53] See HStAD, 10036 Finanzarchiv, Nr. Loc. 38178, Rep. 18, Gen. no. 0400; Berge, 'Die Falknerei am Dresdner Hofe', p. 70; and on the context, Klöditz/Maschke/Rutsch, *Kalkreuth und die Wettiner*.

his falconry by employing falconers from the Netherlands.[54] In contrast, the elector of Brandenburg, King Frederick William I of Prussia, who had also practised falconry at the beginning of his reign, decided to close his falconry in 1730.[55] However, this decision of the 'soldier king' is put into perspective by the developments at the courts of other branches of the House of Brandenburg. It was thus Frederick William I's princely relative and son-in-law, Carl Wilhelm Friedrich of Brandenburg, Margrave of Ansbach, who set up one of the largest falconry corps in Europe.

During his lifetime, Carl Wilhelm Friedrich of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1712–1757) presented himself as a falconer to an extent probably unmatched by any other European prince of the eighteenth century. Interestingly, his biography has some striking parallels with that of Louis XIII.[56] Following the early death of his father in 1723, he became ruler of Ansbach at the age of eleven, with his mother Christiane Charlotte von Württemberg acting as regent for six years. Falconry already played an important role during the youth of the hard-to-educate ruler; later, a monument was erected in a field to commemorate the first heron killed by his falcons in the year he became margrave.[57] After the end of his mother's regency in 1729, the young margrave, who married Friederike Luise of Prussia in the same year, rapidly expanded the princely falconry. By 1750, it included more than fifty courtly falconers, many of them from the Netherlands, about the same number as those of the imperial court.

The margrave's falconers and the princely birds were housed in a magnificent falcon house made of red brick, constructed in 1730–2 in the hunting park of Triesdorf (Figure 5.7).[58] He spared no expense in acquiring valuable gyrfalcons, having his birds portrayed, and hosting magnificent court hunts, whose participants received silver and gold medals with falconry motifs. On the golden falcon ducats, minted in 1753, the margrave engraved his motto '*ELATUS TENDET IN ALTUM*', taken from Jacques Auguste Du Thou's falconry treatise and meaning 'once thrown he will soar high'—a motto that undoubtedly also referred to the margrave's own political-dynastic ambitions (Figure 5.8).[59] Consequently, the

[54] See HStAM, 5, 12812, documents regarding the appointment of Wilhelm Verbruggen, Adrian Roÿers, and additional falconers in 1727 and the following years.

[55] Dreyer, 'Die landesherrliche Falknerei in Preußen', p. 91.

[56] In general on the biography of the 'Wild Margrave', see, most recently, Seiderer, ed., *Carl Wilhelm Friedrich*; on his falconry, see esp. Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, pp. 11–53, and Wüst, 'Jagd, Falknerei und höfische Repräsentation'.

[57] The monument still exists and is represented in Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, p. 15.

[58] In 1759, this building was converted into a residence for the prince and has since been called the 'red castle' (*Rotes Schloss*). Under this name, the building still exists today.

[59] The expression can be found in Du Thou, *Hieracosophion* (1584), pp. 47 and 48; on this treatise, see De Smet, *La fauconnerie à la Renaissance*. The gold ducats were minted in 1753. In 1755, margravial mint masters issued two series of silver thalers that featured the margrave's portrait on one side, a falconer hunting with a falcon on the other, or the falcon with the above-mentioned motto.

Figure 5.7 Cover page of the *Wildbanns- und Waldbuch* (Onolzbach, 1732–3, part 6, detail). Detail of the cover of the manuscript *Wildbanns- und Waldbuch*, Onolzbach 1732–3, part 6. The newly built 'Heron and Falcon House' at Tiersdorf, which was to house one of the largest falconry corps in Europe, can be seen in the background of this drawing

Source: Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, Rep103 a I, Fürstentum Ansbach, Generalrepertorium, Akten, Nr 326 a 6, cover.

numbers of the falcons' kills, printed at the end of the margrave's reign in a separate brochure, were impressive. Between 1730 and 1755, his falcons had killed or caught no fewer than 34,429 game animals, including 4,174 herons, an enormous number by which the Margrave even outshone Emperor Charles VI, as an author from Ansbach proudly noted.[60]

The downside of this rise to the arguably most successful falconer-prince of the empire was near bankruptcy, which made it necessary to reduce the number of

[60] *Tabell wie viel Stuck Ihre Hochfürstl. Durchl. Herr Carl Wilhelm Friedrich Marggraf zu Brandenburg-Onolzbach etc. gebaitzt haben von Anno 1730 bis letzten Decembris 1755* (probably Ansbach 1756), reproduced in Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, pp. 40–1. For the comparison with Emperor Charles VI, see Spiess, *Kleine Beiträge zur Aufnahme und Ausbreitung der Münzwissenschaft* (1765), p. 79, where also the context and meaning of the falcon medals is discussed on pp. 83–6.

Figure 5.8 Gold medal (known as *Falkendukat*), designed by Johann Joseph Götzinger and minted in Schwabach, 1753. At the same time, the Ansbach mint struck a series of silver medals with falconry motifs (known as *Falkenthaler*), which also bore the landgrave's portrait. According to sources, the landgrave sometimes awarded these pieces as *douceurs* to foreign falconers

Source: Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH & Co. KG, Osnabrück, photo by Lübke + Wiedemann KG, Leonberg.

falconers drastically after the landgrave's death in 1757.[61] Costs were probably also a reason for the elector of Hanover and the duke of Weimar to shift their focus to the more symbolic use of falconry rather than expanding their hunting capacities. As mentioned above, the elector of Hanover contested for the office of 'Imperial Arch-Falcon Master'—a claim of symbolic precedence in the field of falconry that was visually underlined by the richly decorated *Falkenzimmer* in the Herrenhausen summer residence near Hanover.[62] However, this symbolic claim was not followed by the Elector-King George I's attempt to actually excel in falconry, neither in England nor in Hannover. The same is true of the duke of Weimar, Ernst August I of Saxony (r. 1707/28–48), who decided to make use of the grown prestige of falconry and its animals not as a princely hunter, but, on a more symbolic level, as founder of the new 'Order of the White Falcon' (*Weißer Falkenorden*).

This new honorary order, founded in 1732, admitted princes and 'persons of rank' who had rendered outstanding services in the military and in the administration (such as much later, in 1816, the poet and privy councillor of Weimar, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe).[63] In the order's founding charter, the choice of the white falcon as its emblem was justified with the zoologically dubious remark that the falcon—an animal that stood for vigilance, sincerity, and loyalty—always

[61] As Kurt Lindner calculates, falconry probably cost the court more than half a million guilders between 1730 and 1747 alone. See Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, p. 29.

[62] See Laß, 'Hannover-Herrenhausen, Schloss'. The decoration of the palace was realized around 1708, when accession to the throne of England was already in the offing.

[63] See Herfurth/Klauss/Klee, *Im Zeichen des Weissen Falken*, pp. 66–80. The full title of the order was *Orden der Wachsamkeit, oder des Weissen Falken*, with a golden, white enamelled falcon decorated with diamonds as its distinctive mark.

followed the imperial eagle.[64] It was up to the reader to decide whether 'to follow the imperial eagle' referred to the duke's faithful service to the emperor—or to his ambitions to advance towards the top circle of imperial princes. In any case, it was clear for contemporaries that the 'white falcon' also referred to the rare Icelandic gyrfalcons, which—as explained in Chapter 1—figured as a sign of royalty. However, it is significant that the duke of Weimar was never actually presented with such a gift by the Danish crown, while several other imperial princes were able to enjoy these precious living gifts.[65]

The years of the Austrian War of Succession and especially the Seven Years War again forced many German princes to reduce the costs of their court keeping, and most of them did not fully re-establish their court falconry afterwards.[66] However, some rulers took advantage of this symbolic vacuum to present themselves with ceremonial pomp as royal falconers. As early as in December 1760, the new landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, Frederick II (r. 1760–85), whose uncle and predecessor Frederick I had combined his title with the Swedish royal crown, decided to re-establish the princely falconry.[67] Under the supervision of the *Obristfalkenmeister* Ludolph Freiherr von und zum Canstein and the Flemish falcon master Joachim Verbrueggen, professional falconers were hired and birds and liveries acquired for the reconstruction of the falconry at Wabern Castle near Kassel. They benefited from the fact that the court of the elector of Cologne had closed its falconry and was willing to sell Icelandic falcons for 70 guilders each and a Nordic gyrfalcon for 30 guilders.[68] Further peregrine falcons were purchased in Brabant and herons in Holland. In spring 1764, the Landgrave's falconry already counted thirty Icelandic falcons, eighteen peregrine falcons, and three goshawks, plus fifty captured herons and twelve kites for training purposes, which were all housed in the newly built falcon house in Wabern.[69] This was the perfect moment to organize a pompous courtly *Beizjagd*, for which high-ranking guests such as the neighbouring prince of Waldeck-Pyrmont, a former enemy, were invited.

Falconry was thus used as a means for demonstrating renewed strength and cultivating political relationships. This effect was further enhanced by the production of falconry-related paintings. Thus, the landgrave's heron hunts were immortalized in a cycle of large-format paintings by Johann Heinrich Tischbein

[64] 'Statuta des Fürstl. Sächß. Weimarischen Ritter-Ordens von der Wachsamkeit', Weimar, 2 August 1732, in Herfurth/Klauss/Klee, *Im Zeichen des Weissen Falken*, pp. 314–15.

[65] See Oorschot, *Vorstelijke Vliegers*, pp. 118–19, 146, and 'Supplementary Materials', Figure 6, https://doi.org/10.48620/88108.

[66] At the Ansbach court, for example, the number of falconers fell further from twenty-two in 1763 to twelve in 1767. See Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, p. 17.

[67] The following information is based on the detailed documentation in HStAM, 5, 12800. On the margrave of Hesse-Kassel's falconry, see also Beckers, 'Glanz und Niedergang der Falknerei in Hessen-Kassel', esp. pp. 209–11.

[68] Von Canstein to Landgrave Frederick II, Kassel, 20 August 1761, HStAM, 5, 12800, fol. 22.

[69] 'Specification', dated 6 February 1764, ibid., fol. 91r.

the Elder (1722–1789).[70] In addition, the court painter Christoph Wilhelm Grote (*c*.1719–1804) realized a portrait series of the most beautiful or best performing raptors of the court of the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, of which twenty-four paintings have been preserved.[71] The strikingly large number of 'royal' Icelandic gyrfalcons at the court of Hesse-Kassel, whose acquisition was facilitated via the multiple dynastic connections with the Danish royal house, was thus made visible far beyond the birds' short lifespan. Portraits such as that of the white gyrfalcon *Landgraf* (Landgrave), first painted in 1772 and renamed *Kayser* (Emperor) in 1780 'because of his particular beauty', reflected the dynastic ambitions of their princely owner, whose blue eyes even found their way into this falcon portrait.[72] In 1803, after the dissolution of the princely falconry and shortly before the end of the Holy Roman Empire, the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel was not to receive the title of emperor, but at least the dignity of elector and royal titles.

Overall, it can be stated that falconry had a particularly high presence at the princely courts of the Holy Roman Empire between the 1680s and the 1760s, Germany's golden age of falconry. Depending on the funds available—that is, especially in times of peace—the imperial princes invested considerable sums and time in order to purchase Nordic falcons, employ Dutch or Flemish falconers, construct new falconries and hunting châteaux, and visually represent the hunts and their participants. This dynamic was not the result of individual *folies* of certain German princes, but rather of the particularly pronounced status competition among rulers within the Holy Roman Empire. In this context, falconry had become a distinct symbolic sign system that served to demonstrate dynastic claims and membership in the German and European society of princes.

5.3 Falconry and Gender: Princesses on High Flight

Hunting has often been described in historiography as an area in which princes and noblemen could perform their masculinity. From an animal and gender history perspective, symbolic analogies were even drawn between the pursuit of wild animals and the symbolic subjugation of women.[73] In fact there are numerous textual and pictorial representations of hunters in the early modern

[70] The cycle of paintings originally hung in Wabern Castle and can now be seen in Fasanerie Castle in Eichzell near Fulda; see *Museum Schloss Fasanerie bei Fulda*, p. 37. On the motifs and their context, see esp. Kuth, 'Gedanken eines heutigen Falkners', and Beckers, 'Glanz und Niedergang der Falknerei in Hessen-Kassel', pp. 207–9.

[71] The full cycle of raptor portraits, which includes twenty-one falcon portraits, one painting representing a goshawk and a sparrow hawk, and two paintings portraying captured kites, is reproduced in Hewicker, 'Die Falkenporträts im Schloß Fasanerie', pp. 50–97; for context, see Ibid., pp. 29–49.

[72] See Hewicker, 'Die Falkenportäts im Schloß Fasanerie', pp. 82–3, and Weber, '*Elatus tendet in altum*', including a reproduction and analysis of the portrait of 'Kayser'.

[73] See, e.g., Warthesen, 'The War against Animals', p. 54; Krüger, 'History of Hunting', pp. 558–9.

period that can be interpreted in this way. In particular, the *chasse à courre* and hunting with firearms were strongly associated with the military in the early modern period, a field of action reserved for men. Moreover, in hunting and falconry treatises, the figure of the professional hunter or the lord of the hunt was generally male. The case of falconry, where female animals were favoured, suggests itself particularly well for a gender-historical interpretation. The luring of wild female falcons by the male falconer, the care, 'manning', and training by the falconer, or even the mourning of a bird that has flown away, could and were implicitly translated into relations between the sexes.[74] Accordingly, such motifs also appear in contemporary literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[75]

However, hunting in general and falconry in particular were far from being exclusively associated with masculinity in premodern times.[76] In the iconography of falconry, women have been strongly represented since the Middle Ages.[77] Some of these depictions were allegorical. Hunting as an activity was often symbolized by the ancient mythological figure of Artemis/Diana. In line with this pictorial discourse, a fresco in the Bavarian electoral residence in Munich, painted by the Flemish painter Peter Candid in 1613, shows a young woman with a white gyrfalcon on her fist representing the art of falconry (*Aucupium*).[78] Other pictures of female falconers such as Claude Déruet's *L'Air* (*c.*1640), depicting several dozen Amazonian ladies on horseback in side-saddles, dressed in colourful robes and falcons on their fists, better seem at first sight to represent the erotic–ironic fantasies of an age obsessed with falconry rather than courtly reality (Figure 5.9). However, many details, such as the ladies' hats decorated with large coloured plums, refer to a well-established seventeenth-century court fashion for female participants in this hunt, and an earlier version of the painting, created around 1626, figures under the title *The Hunt of the Duchess Nicole de Lorraine*.[79]

Similarly dressed princesses on horseback also appear in numerous depictions of courtly mixed-sex falconry parties with clearly identifiable participants, such as the large painting of a heron hunt at the Bavarian court painted around 1690 by Giovanni Battista Curlando for the interiors of Lustheim Castle.[80] In another depiction of an electoral Bavarian falconry party, painted by Peter Jakob Horemans around 1740 for the furnishings of Amalienburg Palace in Nymphenburg

[74] Bates, *Masculinity and the Hunt*, pp. 151–5, 161.
[75] See Horobin, *Falconry in Literature*, 113–38.
[76] Weber, 'Hunting Animals and Doing Gender'.
[77] Fietze, *Im Gefolge Dianas*, pp. 69–94; Almond, *Daughters of Artemis*, pp. 92–7.
[78] This depiction was part of a whole cycle of falconry paintings in the Munich *Residenz*. See Seidenader, *Kulturgeschichte der Falknerei*, vol. 1, pp. 758–67, the ceiling fresco on p. 765.
[79] *La chasse de la duchesse de Lorraine ou allégorie de l'air*, attributed to Claude Déruet, oil on canvas, 1626, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres, inv. no. 878. During this time, Déruet was in the service of the House of Lorraine, which had ennobled him in 1621.
[80] In this well-known picture, the 'Blue Elector' Maxmilian Emanuel of Bavaria is surrounded by Electress Maria Antonia and his two sisters, Maria Anna Victoria and Violante Beatrix, who were no longer at the Munich court at the time as the Grande Dauphine of France and consort of heir of Tuscany. See Glaser, ed., *Kurfürst Max Emanuel*, vol. 1, p. 178, and vol. 2, p. 1.

Figure 5.9 Claude Déruet, *The Four Elements: Air*, oil on canvas, *c.*1640 (detail). The painting is one of a four-part cycle that Déruet produced around 1640 for the interior of the Château de Richelieu. The *cavalière* at the centre of the painting bears the features of Duchess Nicole de Lorraine (1608–1657), for whom the first version of the painting had been made

Source: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Orléans, inv. no. 355/RMN-Grand Palais/Agence Bulloz, photo by Christophe Camus.

Park, the princely ladies no longer appear in festive robes, but in specially tailored blue hunting uniforms—like the Elector-Emperor Charles Albrecht of Bavaria in the centre of the painting (Figure 5.10). In Baroque court society, participation in falconry was not a means of differentiating between men and women, but rather a unifying sign of rank. Consequently, ceremonial treatises emphasized that the falcon on the fist had been used since ancient times by 'kings, queens, princes and princesses', regardless of their gender, to represent 'sovereign power, the quality of a prince and the prerogatives of nobility'.[81]

In this context, the joint falcon hunt of princess and prince could serve as a perfect symbol of marital and political union. In his descriptions of courtly falconry parties at the court of Louis XIII, Charles d'Arcussia also made Queen Anne of Austria play an active role by having her throw a white gyrfalcon into the air at the same time as the king.[82] According to d'Arcussia's account, the two royal falcons then circled a heron in the air, assisted by a smaller tiercel called *Le Gentilhomme* ('The Nobleman'), attacking it and finally bringing it down together; a perfect allegory not only of the cooperation between trained raptors, but also of the union of the French and Spanish monarchies and the cooperation with the French nobility. The same aims and hopes may have motivated Anne of

[81] 'Du Port de l'Oiseau sur le Poing', undated (around 1720), AN, K 1720, no. 20, p. 1.

[82] D'Arcussia, 'Sommaire de la fauconnerie du Roy', *La Fauconnerie* (1644 edn), p. 168. See also the short discussion of this hunt above, Chapter 1.2, p. 40.

Figure 5.10 *The Bavarian Court on a Heron Hunt*, painted by Peter Jakob Horemans, oil on canvas, *c.*1740. This remarkable painting, which is an integral part of the decoration of the Amalienburg in the park of Nymphenburg Palace, combines dynastic representation with genre painting. Women are depicted as part of both the uniformed courtly hunting party and the non-noble crowd of spectators

Source: Schloss Nymphenburg, Amalienburg, inv. no. G 0026/Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung/Maria Scherf, Munich.

Austria, now regent of France, to have herself depicted on an engraving in the 1640s in the same pose as her late husband during a falconry hunt.[83] Similarly, Frederick William of Brandenburg (r. 1640–88) and his consort, Louise Henriette of Orange-Nassau, were depicted as a princely falconer couple in perfect

[83] For the etchings showing Louis XIII and Anne of Austria practising falconry, see Chamerlat, *La fauconnerie et l'art*, p. 139.

Figure 5.11 Pierre-Denis Martin, *The Duchess of Bourgogne departing for a Falcon Hunt*, oil on canvas, *c.*1710 (detail)
Source: Musée du Château de Versailles, inv. no. 5696/RMN-Grand Palais, photo by Gérard Blot.

harmony.[84] These representations correspond to the role of the prince's consort as part of a ruling 'working couple' who also shared or divided up duties of representation, including hunting.[85]

Therefore, the often-stated loss of symbolic importance of royal falconry in France during the late reign of Louis XIV and under his successors must also be put into perspective. A well-known painting by the court and hunting painter Pierre-Denis Martin, for example, shows the Princess Marie Adélaïde of Savoy, duchesse de Bourgogne—the king's granddaughter-in-law and, at the time, the probable future queen of France—on horseback in the park of Versailles practising falconry (Figure 5.11). She is surrounded by her entourage and several courtly falconers, one of whom—possibly the head of the cabinet falconry, Claude I de

[84] Frederick William, elector of Brandenburg, with his spouse Princess Louisa Henriette of Orange-Nassau, etching by Jacob Martsen and Cornelis van Dalen, published by Claes Jansz Visscher, 1647.
[85] The term 'working couple' (*Arbeitspaar*), coined by gender historian Heide Wunder, has also been applied to the role of royal consorts in recent years; see, e.g., Romberg, 'An Early Modern Empress Consort's Role', pp. 108–9, 118.

Forget—is reverently handing her a small merlin to hunt. Similar portraits by Martin's brother, Jean-Baptiste, shows Elisabeth Charlotte d'Orléans, duchesse de Lorraine, the king's niece, on horseback on her way to a courtly falconry party.[86] The same artist later portrayed Marie Leczinska, the Queen Consort of Louis XV, on horseback practising falconry.[87] This illustrates that dynastic rule was a family business in which even royal *plaisirs* such as hunting could be divided among different members of both sexes—both in practice and its representation.[88] While in France the bloody and dangerous stag and boar hunts became the preserve of the king and his male relatives, the more subtle *chasse au vol* here increasingly took on the character of a princess hunt.

Throughout the early modern period, however, princesses appeared not only as companions or substitutes for the falconer-kings, but also as ruling sovereigns who practised falconry. In the late sixteenth century, the French regent Catherine de' Medici and Queen Elizabeth I of England regularly hunted with raptors, and thus made an active contribution to the formation of the coming second golden age of falconry.[89] Hunting proved to be a powerful means of performing royalty and integrating elites at a time when female sovereignty was dynastically possible but repeatedly challenged. In the mid-seventeenth century, Christina of Sweden, already in exile, had herself portrayed by Sébastien Bourdon as a falconer on horseback.[90] In the first half of the eighteenth century, Archduchess Maria Elisabeth of Austria, second regent of the Austrian Netherlands (r. 1724–41), systematically expanded the hunting and falconry apparatus at the Brussels court and commissioned a series of engravings showing her practising various forms of hunting. Particularly memorable was the portrayal of the female regent following a heron hunt, bringing the royal hunt in high flight back to the heartland of European falconry expertise.[91]

It was the Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa, the niece of Maria Elisabeth of Austria, who subsequently not only paradigmatically embodied the combination of maternal femininity and sovereign power, but also played the leading role in the new model of a sociable, civilized, and still highly theatrical courtly falconry. After the death of her father, the passionate falconer Emperor Charles VI, in October 1740, difficult tasks awaited the twenty-three-year-old princess. While she was crowned 'king' (*rex*) of Hungary (1741) and Bohemia (1743), her

[86] Jean-Baptiste Martin, *Equestrian portrait of Élisabeth Charlotte d'Orléans*, oil on canvas, *c.*1704, Collection of the Hofburg, Innsbruck.

[87] Jean-Baptiste Martin, *Portrait de Marie Leczinska devant le château de Fontainebleau*, oil on canvas, *c.*1725, Musée du domaine départemental de Sceaux; Louis-Auguste Brun, *Portrait équestre de la reine Marie-Antoinette*, oil on canvas, 1783, Musée du château de Versailles (two versions).

[88] See Pieragnoli, *Le prince et les animaux*, pp. 147–52.

[89] De Smet, *La fauconnerie à la Renaissance*, pp. 20–9; Neighbors, 'Elizabeth I, Huntress of England', p. 76.

[90] The portrait is reproduced and discussed in Weber, 'Von Fürstinnen und Terzeln', p. 40.

[91] See Hertel, *Maria Elisabeth*, pp. 289–94, with the engraving reproduced on p. 291.

succession in Austria and other territories remained contested until 1748.[92] In addition, the Bavarian Elector Charles Albrecht had initially been elected as the new emperor instead of her husband Franz Stephan of Lorraine. Under these special political circumstances, which cannot be discussed in detail here, the emphasis on dynastic continuity and stability played a central role. Although the empress personally was not inclined towards hunting, she therefore adhered to the hunting calendar of the House of Austria established under Leopold I and further ritualized under Charles VI, including the regular spring falcon hunts at Laxenburg.[93]

There, the empress cultivated an aura of benevolent distance from the hunting spectacles high up in the sky. While her mother, Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, had attended the falcon hunts in the fields together with her imperial consort,[94] there are no records of the Austrian ruler doing so. Instead, after being taken to the hunting grounds in a small carriage, the empress usually took a seat on the balcony of one of the specially built viewing pavilions, from where she could watch her falconers and falcons in action. As we have already seen, the falcon hunts were accompanied by polite conversation, musical performances, and card games, which may have disappointed the remaining noble falconry aficionados, but opened up more spaces for interaction with the empress and other members of her growing family.[95] In this way, Maria Theresa skilfully combined two primary functions of the hunt: representation and integration. While she took her seat in the first box of the great theatre of the world and heaven, so masterfully painted by her court painter Johann Christian Brand in his *Reiherjagd* cycle, attendance at the falconry parties at Laxenburg became more attractive than ever for courtiers, as the next section will show.

Overall, princesses not only participated in courtly falconry, but also gave it a different character. The transition from noble hawking to royal falconry in high flight, which began in the sixteenth century and became dominant in the early seventeenth century, helped to make falconry a social event for both sexes. In the eighteenth century, in France and to some extent in the Holy Roman Empire, princesses became the dominant figures in the representation of this form of hunting. Wearing colourful feathered hats, they gracefully watched from the first rank how female falcons, with names such as 'Landgravine', 'Princess', or 'Queen of Iceland', attacked their prey high in the air, accompanied by the screaming falconers and barking dogs on the ground, giving an image of calm yet accessible sovereignty. Falconry thus gave a feminine touch to the whole princely hunt under the *ancien régime*.

[92] On Maria Theresa, see the recent magistral biography by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, here esp. pp. 100–1, 109, and 114 on the significance of her 'political' gender.

[93] Ibid., pp. 379–80.

[94] At least according to the colourful 'description of a heron hunt' held at Laxenburg in May 1715, which can be found in St. Julien, *Miscellen über Falknerei*, pp. 22–4.

[95] See Schneider, 'Der Alltag der Séjours', pp. 217–19.

5.4 Fashion, Status, and Sociability: The Courtiers' View

Falconry in the high flight was a powerful symbol of sovereignty, but without observers this symbol would have fallen flat. Only through the presence of courtiers and foreign guests, as well as the spectacle's representation in images and texts, could the living metaphor unfold its effect. But what motivated nobles to attend the royal falcons hunts? Some previous studies suggested that the elites were dazzled by the glamorous hunting spectacles at princely courts and thus forgot their political claims. However, this interpretation of courtly falconry as a means of corroborating absolutism is not very convincing, especially if we take into account that the birds' aerial battles took place almost out of sight and hearing range of the human participants.[96] As I will argue in this section, most attendees went to princely falconry events to see people rather than falcons. For members of the Austrian nobility like Count Johann Joseph of Khevenhüller-Metsch (1706–1776), whose notes on his various stays at Laxenburg will be analysed in depth, courtly falconry was a stage for the display of status as well as an attractive 'point of contact' that could be used for advancing one's career.[97]

In the context of the emerging Baroque monarchies, an invitation to a princely falconry party provided a stage for nobles of both sexes to present themselves to the court and the wider public. According to the *Mercure galant*'s report, 'an infinity of cavaliers, and a great number of carriages full of gentlemen' went to the great falconry party organized by the *grand fauconnier* Desmarets in Saint-Denis in February 1699. The ambassadors appeared with 'a very beautiful retinue' and 'a great number of young gentlemen and ladies on horseback' had ridden to the door of the guest of honour, the papal nuncio—a detail that shows that King Louis XIV himself did not even take part in this 'truly royal hunt'.[98] The courtiers riding along formed more than an astonished audience for the representation of sovereignty in the third dimension. For their part, they were also agents who, by attending the falconry hunts, flaunted their status and their allegiance to the court.

As the professional falconers and their birds had the active part in the hunt, the courtiers' performance required above all upright posture and appropriate dress. Pictorial representations of falcon hunts from the seventeenth century show the

[96] On princely hunts as a means of corroborating absolutism through 'manipulation' of the noble lifestyle, see Kruedener, *Die Rolle des Hofes im Absolutismus*, p. 56. For a critique of this view of the court as an instrument of 'mass suggestion', see Duindam, *Myths of Power*, esp. pp. 22–34, 194.

[97] The interpretation of the court as a 'point of contact' between rulers and elites goes back to Geoffrey Elton's studies on the Tudor court and has since been taken up by many court historians; see Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, p. 50; Duindam, 'The Court as a Meeting Point'.

[98] *Mercure galant*, March 1699, pp. 90–1. The *Mercure galant* had already reported on the 'chasse véritablement Royale' in the February issue (pp. 213–14). Possibly due to protests by the *grand fauconnier*, who was not even mentioned in this account, a more detailed report was subsequently published in March. In Dangeau's diary, the hunt is not mentioned. The first falcon hunt in which the king participated took place at Versailles on 2 March; see Dangeau, *Journal*, vol. 7, p. 39.

members of the court in colourful dresses made of silk and other valuable textiles. As we have seen above, ladies are often represented with caps adorned with large dyed ostrich feathers, while the gentlemen's felt hats could be adorned either with ostrich feathers, too, or with mixed feather arrangements similar to those that were attached to the falcons' hoods. Hat feathers were generally in vogue in the seventeenth century, but their particularly extensive use in falconry can also be read as a reference to the important role of birds and their element, the air, in this hunt. In particular, the decoration of falconry hats with the feathers of captured herons and other game animals had the character of a trophy that referred to past hunting successes.[99]

Dress marked difference, but could also emphasize belonging. From the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, princes, falconers, and courtiers increasingly showed up in almost identical hunting uniforms.[100] At the end of the eighteenth century, a German hunting manual commented retrospectively that the dress codes varied from place to place but generally emphasized the cohesion of the hunting group, including the sovereign:

> At some courts, only the nobles visiting the court were allowed to wear the uniform, at others, with some differences, also the bourgeois who were invited to the hunt. The prince wore the same uniform as the cavaliers when he was hunting. Finally, the uniformity was carried so far that on certain hunting occasions, even the participating horses all had to be of the same colour.[101]

The uniform varied according to the type and place of hunting. In contrast to the mostly green hunting costumes worn for shooting and coursing, the participants of falcon hunts often wore blue or red costumes. Representations of falconry hunts at the Bavarian court or at the court of Hesse-Kassel in the eighteenth century show that women also wore hunting costumes decorated with gold or silver embroideries—only the long skirts instead of trousers with long boots marked the gender difference.[102] Although the sovereign was usually singled out by his or her central position in the composition of the picture and by other signs of status such as a white gyrfalcon, these representations nevertheless give the impression of a homogeneous group that is set apart from the watching observers. The invitation to travel to Fontainebleau or Laxenburg in a specially tailored hunting costume made a courtiers' affiliation to the inner circle of the princely states visible.

[99] On the trade and use of feathers in the early modern period, see Lefèvre, *Le commerce et l'industrie de la plume pour parure*, here esp. pp. 150–2, and Shrubb, *Feasting, Fowling and Feathers*, esp. p. 192.

[100] On the significance of hunting dresses at early modern courts, see Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, pp. 55–8.

[101] *Handbuch für praktische Forst- und Jagdkunde*, vol. 2 (1796), p. 429.

[102] On Hesse-Kassel, see the large paintings of the so-called Tischbein cycle, reproduced in Kuth, 'Gedanken eines heutigen Falkners', pp. 11–16, and the contextualization in Hunter-Stiebel, *Hesse*.

Accordingly, uniforms play an important role in the notes that Count Khevenhüller made during his stays in Laxenburg. After studies in Leiden, the count had been appointed chamberlain at the Viennese court in 1727. A year later, coinciding with his lucrative marriage to Countess Carolina von Metsch, he was nominated *Reichshofrat*. After years in the diplomatic service, Khevenhüller returned to the Viennese court in 1742 as *Obersthofmarschall*. At first, however, this court office did not entail regular attendance at the imperial family's spring sojourns in Laxenburg. Like other noblemen and diplomats, he had to 'attend court at Laxenburg' on public gala days or when the hunting party passed the house that his wife had inherited there.[103] From 1752 onwards, however, the Khevenhüller couple belonged to the inner circle of about twenty to thirty courtiers who were accommodated with the imperial family in the Castle of Laxenburg and the surrounding buildings and distinguished themselves from outsiders by a common uniform.

As the appearance of this uniform varied over the years, Khevenhüller also noted the different colours and materials. On 12 September 1758, for instance, when the inner court travelled exceptionally to Laxenburg for a '*Herbst-Baitz*' (autumn falcon hunt), the clothing 'for us men consisted of red upper coats embroidered with gold and similar green waistcoats', while 'the ladies' uniforms consisted of red jackets with blonde laces in gold and silver'.[104] The following spring,

> We men wore red uniforms again; but because the ladies had changed theirs and wore blue jackets decorated with silver lace, we had the embroidery of our green waistcoats changed to blue silk cloth, the same as the ladies', in order to avoid at least the contrast between the green and the blue and at the same time avoid double expenses.[105]

Similar to court dress in general, falconry uniforms could communicate emotions such as joy or sorrow. At the first Laxenburg spring hunt without Emperor Francis I Stephan, who had passed away in August 1765, the lords and courtiers wore uniforms '*en petit deuil*, ash-coloured cloth with a border of *tissu de ruban*, which should appear like black and white embroidery; the waistcoats were of white *gros de tour* with the same decoration.'[106] Furthermore, the uniform remained a sign of affiliation even beyond the hunts in Laxenburg. For a feast organized by *Obristfalkenmeister* Count Saint Julien, for instance, the imperial couple and the exclusive circle of courtiers all appeared 'in Laxenburg uniform'.[107] This example shows that falconry uniforms symbolized a special bond between the Austrian rulers and their elites.

[103] Khevenhüller, *Tagebuch*, vol. 1, p. 217.
[104] Ibid., vol. 5, pp. 59–60.
[105] Ibid., vol. 5, p. 101, 13 May 1759.
[106] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 181, 3 May 1766.
[107] Ibid., vol. 5, p. 69, 23 October 1758.

The fact that the sovereign did not have much to do during falcon hunts also allowed for lucrative exchanges. Contemporary paintings of the imperial falcon hunts in Laxemburg show Empress Maria Theresa in a red uniform surrounded by her courtiers in a pavilion—also called '*Lusthaus*' or '*Baitzhaus*'—during a falcon hunt led by the professional falconers and their birds. The dramatic aerial battles between the trained raptors and herons occupied the attention of the attendees only for short intervals. In between, there was plenty of time for popular plays such as tric-trac, pharaoh, or lansquenet, or for relatively informal conversations. Like evening salons and court balls (which were also part of the programme during the Laxenburg stays), falcon hunts thus were a courtly model of sociability that briefly suspended the strict rules of ceremonial. These events were accessible to an exclusive but varying circle of invited guests whose names were meticulously noted by Khevenhüller at the beginning of every journey to Laxenburg.[108]

In 1756, despite the outbreak of the Seven Years War, Laxenburg's function as a point of contact became even more visible.[109] In this year, the question who sat with whom in the carriage on the way to the hunting site became particularly interesting because the pairs of courtiers that went '*in biroccio*' (in two-wheeled carriages) to the '*Baitz*' were selected by a random draw, always one gentleman and one lady (Figure 5.12). Khevenhüller thus came into closer contact with the court ladies von Turn and von Göes as well as the Countesses of Ulfeld, Daun, and Harrach during the first days of his stay. On 7 May, he won the main prize in this networking lottery, when he was able to travel to the hunt with the Holy Roman Empress herself.[110] In the evenings, various opera and ballet performances took place, including the play *L'oiseleur* ('The Bird Catcher'). As a good host, the emperor lost 30,000 ducats in games of chance during the last eight days. Finally, as Khevenhüller also noted, on 29 April a secret cabinet meeting was held to discuss a reaction to Prussia, and on 19 May, Maria Theresa signed the documents of ratification for the new alliance with France.

Khevenhüller's entries about the actual falcon hunts remain very similar over the years. From the courtier's perspective, the interesting question was not the catch quotas of the imperial falcons. Accordingly, Khevenhüller usually only briefly noted that the usual '*Baitz*' had taken place in the morning and afternoon or that it had been cancelled due to bad weather. Only very rarely did he consider the course of the hunt worth mentioning. This was the case when, for example, a falcon hunt went so badly that 'unfortunately not a single heron was obtained',

[108] See, e.g., ibid., vol. 3, p. 102, 3 May 1753, where the diarist lists all participants of the Laxenburg *séjour* of 1753.

[109] For the following, se the entries in Khevenhüller's diaries from 25 April to 5 June 1756 in ibid., vol. 4, pp. 16–25.

[110] Although, as he noted, his luck had been manipulated: Maria Theresa did not want to travel with the young Chamberlain von Starhemberg, who had originally been drawn to accompany her. See ibid., vol. 4, p. 18.

Figure 5.12 *Excursion by Empress Maria Theresa and her court to a falcon hunt at Laxenburg*, drawing by Johann Christian Brand, sepia on paper, *c.*1760. Some of the Empress's noble companions on the carriage rides to the hunting pavilion at Laxenburg were drawn by lot. Notable in this depiction is also the closed litter in which some of the most valuable falcons were transported by horse to the hunt
Source: Wien Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 19113.

and this in front of 'a great number of spectators.'[111] What certainly counted more than catches was being close to the ruling couple and the various contacts with other influential people. The extent to which individual courtiers knew how to use a private carriage ride with the sovereign to present their own concerns may have depended on their skills and on the influential peoples' mood on the day in question. But those who, like Khevenhüller, were always present at the *Frühlingsbaiz* in Laxenburg and at other regular events and trips over the years had excellent chances of bolstering their positions at the emperor's court.[112]

Khevenhüller's diary repeatedly testifies to the importance of the Laxenburg stays for the social upward mobility of himself and his family. Already during his second full stay in Laxenburg, Empress Maria Theresa told Khevenhüller in a personal conversation that he had been awarded a pension of 4,000 florins per year. At this moment, he briefly considered whether he should instead ask for

[111] See ibid., vol. 3, p. 30, 7 May 1752.
[112] On these functional relationships at the Viennese court, see, in particular, Hengerer, *Kaiserhof und Adel*.

'another favour' via the *Obristhofmeister* Count von Ulfeld, 'namely to request promotion to princely dignity and thereby establishing the memory of my name for my family and descendants'. However, he rejected this idea and accepted the pension.[113] This patient strategy paid out in the long run. In the following years, Khevenhüller succeeded in pursuing a splendid career at the Viennese court. In 1764, Khevenhüller's ambition was fulfilled when he became the first member of his family who was elevated to the rank of imperial prince, and in 1770, Emperor Joseph II finally nominated him *Obersthofmeister*, the most prestigious court office in Vienna.

Besides advancing his personal career, Khevenhüller was also able to secure lucrative positions for his sons after having repeatedly addressed the relevant concerns in Laxenburg. At the beginning of the '*Laxenburg Séjour*' in 1770, for example, he managed to speak to Maria Theresa alone in the garden after dinner in order to hear her 'intentions regarding my son Sigmund', who was designated as envoy to Naples. After having presented his cause, which revolved around the question of rank, the empress instructed Khevenhüller to summon his son to settle the matter.[114] Four years later, it was a special pleasure for *Obristhofmeister* Khevenhüller to publicly announce the appointment of his second son Franz Anton as President of the Accounts during a stay in Laxenburg.[115] In 1775, one year before his death, Khevenhüller finally also received the hereditary honorary office of *Obristerblandhofmeister* of the Archduchy of Lower Austria for himself and his descendants.

Princely falcon hunts thus created opportunities for courtiers to better position themselves in the game of power and prestige at court. Rather than being a perfect instrument to control the nobility, the clock-like functioning of court life, with its endless sequence of attendances, conversations, and more or less spectacular events, enabled members of the office-holding elites to have regular encounters with the sovereign and other powerful people who not only decided on war and peace, but also on titles and offices. Obviously, this form of holding court was extremely expensive for the sovereigns. However, these were necessary investments because they allowed the country's elites to participate symbolically and materially in the ruling structure. Otherwise, their motivation to participate in the celebration of sovereignty might quickly decline. When, as was the case shortly after the end of the Seven Years War and the accession of Joseph II to the throne, cost cuts were made in the entertainment programme at Laxenburg, this was immediately noted critically by grandees such as our Prince Khevenhüller,

[113] Khevenhüller, *Tagebuch*, vol. 3, p. 104, 8 May 1753.

[114] Ibid., vol. 7, p. 23, 14 May 1770. See also ibid., vol. 7, pp. 27–28, 6 June 1770, still at Laxenburg, regarding the same issue. Johann Sigismund Friedrich von Khevenhüller (1732–1801) had already been envoy at the courts of Portugal and Savoy. In 1775, he would become first plenipotentiary of the emperor in imperial Italy.

[115] Ibid., vol. 8, p. 21, 15 May 1774. He then thanked the emperor and empress for this favour.

who saw himself 'deprived of an amusement'.[116] Court life thus also created expectations 'from below', which even monarchs with little interest in hunting and gambling, such as Emperor Joseph II, could not entirely escape.

5.5 Falcons and Their Falconers in the Theatre State

In 1763, the German privy councillor, legal scholar, and political author Friedrich Carl von Moser (1723–1798) complained that in the princely galleries, 'portraits of the most famous mistresses of our Christian regents' hung side by side in most expensive golden frames, whereas he had not found any portraits of loyal state servants—'if one does not count among this group a personal horse, the personal hounds, the most beautiful falcons, the court fools, and the chamber dwarfs, whose portraits I have found in various pleasure palaces.'[117] Despite its ironic tone, this statement points to an important representative function of falcons and other princely animals in courtly contexts. Falcons were not only seen as a proxy and an extension of the sovereign's will; they also embodied the perfect subject and were therefore used to propagate notions of loyalty and hierarchy in the evolving Baroque theatre states.[118]

In *ancien régime* France, the courtly raptors and their falconers were involved in ceremonial entries into cities, which were one of the four key state ceremonies that traditionally re-enforced or re-established the connection between the ruler and the wider kingdom.[119] For instance, on 26 August 1660, shortly after the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees, the young King Louis XIV and his new spouse Maria Theresa of Spain (Marie-Thérèse d'Autriche) solemnly entered the city of Paris, accompanied by an endless parade of soldiers, horses, coaches, and courtiers. In this public event that was carefully orchestrated to celebrate the 'triumphator…, principle actor and master of this grand ceremony', Louis XIV, the 'officers of the falconry', wearing blue uniforms, immediately followed the king's and queen's cortège, observed by thousands of citizens on both sides of the street.[120]

This prominent position of the falconers in the order of entry was no coincidence, but was linked to the symbolism of the falcon as a sign of power. According

[116] Ibid., vol. 6, p. 98, 29 May 1765.

[117] Moser, *Gesammelte moralische und politische Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 471. In the same essay, Moser consequently pled for the establishment of a 'hall for patriots' ('*Patrioten-Saal*').

[118] Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, p. 7. On the increasing medialization of court life from the seventeenth century onwards, see also Bauer, 'Nachrichtenmedien und höfische Gesellschaft'; Bauer, 'Strukturwandel der höfischen Öffentlichkeit'.

[119] The other ceremonies were the *sacre*, the *lits-de-justice*, and the royal funerals. On the evolution of these ceremonies, see Leferme-Falguières, *Les courtisans*, pp. 19–79.

[120] See *La magnifique et superbe entrée du Roy et de la Reyne en la ville de Paris (26 Aoust)* (1660), p. 21, and the offical account *L'entree triomphante de leurs maiestez* (1662), pp. 26 and 28. On the context, see Leferme-Falguières, *Les courtisans*, pp. 1–10, and on the general significance of royal entries, Dillon, *The Language of Space*, ch. 2.

to a handwritten treatise stored in the papers of the French court ceremonial administration, such entries with the 'falcon on the fist' served since ancient times 'to designate the sovereign power, the quality of prince, and the prerogatives of the nobility'.[121] Moreover, the docile hooded raptors on the falconers' fists underlined the values of loyalty, discipline, and order that the long parades communicated to the watching subjects. Therefore, eighteenth-century authors of 'ceremonial science' still considered the participation of falconers with falcons on their fist a constitutive element of a royal entry.[122]

Especially after its relocation to Versailles in 1682, social life at the French royal court became an eternal sequence of rituals that were repeated daily, weekly, or yearly.[123] These regular events and the increasingly pompous celebrations of dynastic events such as births or marriages partially diminished the importance of public ceremonies in front of the country's subjects in favour of interactions with the elites and foreign representatives. As shown above, the falcon hunts that usually took place in spring were an integral part of the hunting calendar at the royal court.[124] In addition, the falconers of the royal cabinet were called upon for significant dynastic events such as, for example, the reception of the Austrian Archduchess and future Queen of France Marie Antoinette in May 1770.[125]

Beyond such events, three or four other regular occasions where hooded falcons entered the court halls can be identified: the presentation of the falcons that the *gardes des aires* had caught in the royal forests that usually took place on 22 July; the handover of a falcon by an emissary of the Abbey of Saint-Hubert in the Ardennes, usually in November; the public handover of Maltese gift falcons by the envoys of the Grand Master in December or January; and the presentation of gifted gyrfalcons from Iceland to the king that sometimes took place in the context of the New Year's reception for foreign ambassadors at Versailles.[126] From the viewpoint of the protagonists, the significance of these exchanges varied between loyal service and diplomatic gifting. Yet, from the royal court's perspective, the tame, calm posture of the hooded raptors that were handed over could be read as a sign for the donator's own symbolic subjection to the *Roi Très Chrétien*, whose supreme authority was permanently celebrated.

Also in the composite monarchy of the Austrian Habsburgs, hooded falcons participated in ceremonies expressing loyalty and subordination. The most important among them was the so-called *Erbhuldigung*, a public oath of obedience proclaimed by the estates that took place in various parts of the monarchy when a new sovereign came to power. Thus, on 8 November 1712, the estates of Lower Austria rendered homage to the new Duke of Austria, King of Hungary

[121] 'Du Port de l'Oiseau sur le Poing', undated (around 1720), AN, K 1720, no. 20, pp. 1–2.
[122] Rohr, *Einleitung zur Ceremoniel-Wissenschaft* (1729), ch. 'of entries' (*Von Einzügen*), p. 619.
[123] See Leferme-Falguières, *Les courtisans*, ch. 4.
[124] See above, Chapter 3.1.
[125] This was appreciated in Austria; see *Wienersches Diarium*, 6 June 1770, no. 45, p. 9.
[126] See above, Chapters 1.4 and 2.1.

and Bohemia, and Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI in a pompous ceremony that took place in Vienna.[127] As one of the sixteen holders of hereditary offices (*Erbämter*), the *Obrist-Erb-Land-Falkenmeister* Count Christoph Gottlieb Volkra played a prominent role in this public event. After a first appearance in the *Hofburg* with 'a falcon hood on his hat and a falcon', during which the emperor confirmed Volkra in his office, the count, his falcon, and members of the imperial falconry participated in the public parade to St Stephen's Cathedral next to the *Erb-Land-Jäger-Meister* Count of Zinzendorf, the latter being accompanied by a couple of hunters and a hunting dog.[128] Volkra then attended the ecclesiastical ceremony 'without a falcon', as the account explicitly mentioned, but afterwards, when the representatives of the estates solemnly took their oath of obedience in the *Ritterstube*, the hooded raptor was on his fist again.[129]

The same procedure was observed when the estates took their oath in front of Maria Theresa on 22 November 1740. Yet, this time, the account even specified that the black-dressed *Obrist-Falken-Meister*, Count Johann Albrecht Saint Julien, participated in the parade and the oath ceremony 'with a beautiful white-grey speckled falcon on his hand, accompanied by the servants of the royal falconry'.[130] It is noteworthy that in this precarious moment, when the newly constructed House of Habsburg-Lorraine was denied the title of Emperor in favour of their Wittelsbach rivals, the rank of the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia was highlighted even more by the use of a hooded white Icelandic gyrfalcon. In the visual representation of the '*actus* of the oath of obedience', the presence of the master falconer and his bird in close proximity to the empress during the oath ceremonies reinforced the symbolic demonstration of loyalty of the Austrian estates and elites (Figure 5.13).[131]

Just like in Versailles, the falconers and their falcons also had their moments of display in the course of the year, especially during the Viennese courts' regular spring stays in Laxenburg and occasional falconry parties in summer or fall. Moreover, their presence was not limited to the hunts, either. Every year on New Year's Day, the entire falconry corps of Laxenburg went to Vienna to pay a public courtesy visit to the emperor. This public appearance was carefully prepared. The falconers, dressed in their liveries, first went from Laxenburg to Vienna and assembled before the house of the *Obristfalkenmeister* at 8 o'clock in the morning. Then they marched '*in corpore*' to the Hofburg, probably with their falcons on

[127] See the detailed description by Johann Baptist Mair von Mairsfeld, *Beschreibung, was auf Ableiben weyland Ihrer Keyserl. Majestät Josephi, biß nach vorgangener Erb-Huldigung…sich merkwürdiges hat zugetragen…* (1712).

[128] Ibid., pp. 44, 54. [129] Ibid., pp. 57, 59.

[130] Kriegl, *Erb-Huldigung* (1740), p. 69. See also ibid., pp. 12, 75, 80.

[131] The later ceremonies followed the same protocol. On 25 April 1792, less than a year before the closure of the imperial falconry in Laxenburg, the *Oberstfalkenmeister* (represented by his brother) participated in the oath of obeisance ceremony with a falcon on his fist and the 'royal falconry in his wake'. See *Wiener Zeitung*, 28 April 1792, p. 3.

Figure 5.13 *The Act of Obeisance in the Knights' Chamber*, engraving taken from Kriegl (Vienna, 1740, detail) *Erb-Huldigung* that had taken place in Vienna on 22 November 1740. The detail shows the *Erblandfalkenmeister* Count Saint Julien (no. 15) with a white gyrfalcon on his wrist during the oath ceremony for the new Austrian ruler and future Holy Roman Empress, Maria Theresa. Next to him stands the Master of the Hunt, accompanied by a hunting dog
Source: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Res/2 Austr. 96 h.

their fist.[132] The same procedure was sometimes repeated on other holidays. On Easter Monday 1764, for instance, when the imperial family moved to Schönbrunn, 'the imperial-royal hunters' and falconers' corps paid their respects on horseback', as the *Wienerisches Diarium* reported.[133] Performed to honour the ruling dynasty, watched by a courtly and urban public, and disseminated in the evolving public

[132] Some days before, they received orders on how to proceed. See, e.g., Martschläger to the falconers in Laxenburg, Vienna, 24 December 1771, HHStA HA OJäA 856, Fasz. 1, no. 44, and Martschläger to the falconers in Laxenburg, Vienna, 27 December 1781, ibid., Fasz. 11, no. 57.
[133] *Wienerisches Diarium*, 25 April 1764, no. 33, p. 9.

sphere through printed reports and illustrations, the ceremonious visits of the imperial falconers were part of a never-ending ritual of deference that bound together the branches of the composite Habsburg monarchy.

Although the falcons' active roles in dynastic rituals and court ceremonies in Vienna and Versailles point to the ongoing importance of the living animals as symbols for loyalty, these events were also complemented by occasions in which the princely raptors were represented through words and figures—or costumed princes and courtiers. This was, for instance, the case in the *Ballet de la Merlaison*, composed by King Louis XIII himself and performed in Chantilly on 15 March 1635. The ballet staged a falcon hunt on blackbirds (*merle*), a form of hunting that the king liked to practise in winter. In the course of the piece, an old man representing winter, two Flemish cage-carriers, the *chef du vol* and a number of falconers, bird catchers, and bird merchants entered the scene. They were represented by high courtiers such as the king's new favourite, Claude de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon (the father of the famous memoirist), and Louis' natural cousin (and future rival) François de Vendôme, duc de Beaufort, who acted as guards (*piccoteurs*). The king, who was not only a passionate falconer but also a talented ballet dancer, represented the wife (!) of a merchant of falcon lures and bells—a double cross-dressing of gender and rank 'that shows that the most august majesties also feel at ease in other contexts than punctilious severity'.[134] Winter was followed by spring, the season of the more royal heron hunt. Accordingly, the last scene showed 'the chief of the heron flight, represented by Le Marests on horseback, followed by six falconers on foot, with their coats (*cazaques*)'.[135]

Fiction and reality merged in this play and both contributed to the image politics of Louis XIII. 'Le Marests' was probably Nicolas Dauvet, comte Desmarets, who later became *grand fauconnier* de France. Although no living falcons are explicitly mentioned in the account or the booklet, it seems likely that some hooded merlin or peregrine falcons, set on one of the above-mentioned cages or on the falconers' fists, were part of the décor of the performance. Moreover, the scenes were performed in a place where falconry was regularly practised[136]—and this was a political message on its own: The many '*grands seigneurs*' that watched the performance and the informed readers of the *Gazette*, which printed a detailed account, certainly noticed that Chantilly was the expropriated château of the noble rebel Henri II, duc de Montmorency, who had been executed by order of the king three years earlier.[137] Moreover, France was on the eve of declaring war on Spain and against the emperor; the same issue of the *Gazette* reported on

[134] 'Le BALET DE LA MERLAIZON', *Recueil de toutes les Gazettes* (1636), no. 35, 'Extraordinaire du XXII. Mars X.CD.XXXV' (12 March 1635), pp. 143–4, p. 143. The account copies the descriptions of the individual acts from the printed programme booklet (see *Ballet de la Merlaison*, 1635, p. 4) but adds more details about the performance itself. On the background of the performance, see Moote, *Louis XIII*, p. 268.

[135] 'Le BALET DE LA MERLAIZON', p. 144.

[136] See Laporte, *Chasse à courre*, p. 94.

[137] 'Le BALET DE LA MERLAIZON', p. 143.

the positions of the French and Swedish troops. Thus, the conspicuously harmless topic of the courtly ballet stood in sharp contrast to the overall political situation. By demonstrating *sprezzatura* in face of domestic troubles and the imminent entrance into European battlefields, the king used this ballet-cum-falconry performance to show his superiority as a ruler to present and absent observers alike.

Another courtly event that took place at Favorita castle in Vienna almost a century later indicates that even pictures of falcons could serve as socio-political metaphors. In July 1719, the emperor's *Obriststallmeister*, Count Michael Johann von Althann, and the *Obristfalkenmeister*, Count Johann Albrecht von Saint Julien, co-organized a prize shooting (*Cränzel-Schiessen*) held in the presence of Emperor Charles VI and his spouse, Empress Christine of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, who both won a prize.[138] According to the *Wienerisches Diarium*, the targets were ornamented with pictures and inscriptions that referred to the offices of the donators. On one of the targets sponsored by the master falconer Saint Julien, 'a falcon was painted high above who descended on a heron on the right, with the inscription: I know how to recover the advantage that was stolen from me when the time has come.' On the other targets, a falconer on horseback was represented 'with a released falcon hunting a kite, whose head served as goal', stating 'whoever wants to hunt birds with falcons has to know the art of riding, too.'[139] Overall, the shooting contest referred to the chivalric virtues of the ancient courtly riding tournaments. However, the gun replaced the lance, and the falcons that attacked their prey high above the ground had become mere symbols to proclaim didactic messages. The tamed raptors had undergone a double medial transformation from living beings that could be admired in full action near Laxenburg to painted figures in a courtly festive event, to printed metaphors in a semi-official newspaper that reached a wider Austrian and European public.

The analysis of ceremonies and other courtly events has shown that falcons and their representations clearly played an important symbolic role in the Baroque 'theatre state'. But what was the raptors' significance in the media system of the *ancien régime*? An analysis of the appearance of words such as 'falcon' or 'hawk' in printed periodicals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows that these words were often used in contexts related to princely courts.[140] Besides reports on courtly falcon hunts and numbers illustrating their successes that were discussed in the previous sections, accounts on the diplomatic exchange of captured birds of prey make up a large part of the corpus. Already in 1609, a few years after the emergence of the first regular printed newspaper in Germany, European falcon diplomacy left its traces in the new medium. The *Relation* from Strasbourg printed an account from Rome reporting that the Grand Master of

[138] *Wienerisches Diarium*, 26 July 1719, pp. 9–11. [139] Ibid., p. 11.

[140] The following observations are based on an analysis of the digitized corpora of the periodicals *La Gazette* (Paris, 1631 ff.), *Wienerisches Diarium/Wiener Zeitung* (Vienna, 1703 ff.), and *The London Gazette* (London, 1665/6 ff.) in combination with selected other newspapers.

Malta had sent a frigate to seek French military support against the Ottoman 'armada'. 'Numerous falcons and lures', gifts for King Henri IV, were sent along with this ship. Yet unfortunately, the frigate was 'caught by the Turks, and all people were killed'.[141] Some months later, the *Aviso Relation oder Zeitung* from Wolfenbüttel published a report from Vienna that an envoy of the duke of Württemberg had handed over several barrels of wine and some falcons to His Majesty.[142]

Over the years, the falcon diplomacy of the Knights of Malta and the king of Denmark became increasingly institutionalized, and, correspondingly, the reports in the European newspapers about these bird exchanges became more repetitive. Throughout the eighteenth century, the correspondents of the *Wienerisches Diarium* reported every autumn from Copenhagen that another falcon ship had arrived in port from Iceland. In the issue that was published in Vienna on 10 October 1753, for example, the readers were informed that the 'usual falcon ship' had arrived on Sunday, 10 September, in Copenhagen, with '26 white and 121 grey falcons from Iceland' on board.[143] Thereupon the paths of the gift falcons to the individual courts were meticulously documented, in some cases detailing every single intermediate stop that preceded the public handover at the emperor's and other courts. For the courtiers, diplomats, or merchants who read these reports, their content nevertheless remained interesting, as the falcon gifts were seen as indicators for the diplomatic relations among the princes.

These regular newspaper reports on gifted falcons from Malta and Denmark certainly contributed to the fact that authors of constitutional and international law began to deal with this issue. In his *Grundlehren des jezigen Europäischen Völcker-Rechts* ('Foundations of the Current European Law of Nations'), published in 1778, Johann Jacob Moser (1701–1778), the father of the above-mentioned Friedrich Carl von Moser, discussed the falcons that the Grand Master of Malta sent annually to Naples as one of few known examples of a diplomatic gift among Christian sovereigns 'that is owed', whereas the Icelandic falcons belonged to the sort of gifts 'that are not owed, but are customary'.[144] Less than fifteen years later, in 1792, the German legal scholar Karl Gottlob Günther (1752–1832) considered the Maltese falcons sent to kings of Sicily as proof of an incomplete sovereignty, while the falcon gifts of both the king of Denmark and the Grand Master of Malta to the king of France still figured as examples for a courtesy 'based on custom'.[145] However, while Moser dealt with the subject of living diplomatic gifts neutrally, for Günther it was already a sign of a practice 'largely based on sheer arbitrariness' that usually occurred in the relations between 'European sovereigns' and 'Asian

[141] *Relation Aller Fuernemmen und gedenckwuerdigen Historien…* (Strasburg, 1609), dated Rome, 18 April 1609, http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de (accessed 7 July 2021).
[142] *Aviso Relation oder Zeitung* (Wolfenbüttel, 1609), dated Vienna, 14 August 1609, ibid.
[143] *Wienersches Diarium*, 10 October 1753, no. 83, p. 4.
[144] Moser, *Erste Grundlehren des jezigen Europäischen Völcker-Rechts* (1778), p. 49.
[145] Günther, *Europäisches Völkerrecht in Friedenszeiten*, vol. 2 (1792), pp. 162, 481.

and African states'—a foretaste of colonial legitimation strategies that explained the alleged inferiority of non-European rulers not least for such practices that had previously also been widespread in Europe.[146]

In one significant case, the 'paper falcons' of the European printed media were only very indirectly related to courts—and rather to power relations and international politics. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the fast raptors gave their name to various royal warships that cruised the seas.[147] Accordingly, the newspapers regularly reported about 'Falcons' that landed or departed from harbours, attacked pirates or other warships, and were themselves captured on the high seas. In 1724, for instance, the French *Gazette* reported that the Dutch armed merchant ship *Faucon*, commanded by Captain Pierre Valk (!), had been attacked by Algerian corsairs.[148] These ships were sometimes also equipped with 'falcons', 'sakers', or 'falconets' (French *fauconneau*), as certain types of cannons were called. Imagining birds when reading these naval accounts would certainly be misleading. Nevertheless, these falcons were more than simple homonyms. They are the product of a metaphorical translation between agents in the primary elements of air and water and show that from the perspective of the kings and their admirals who selected the ships' names, falcons embodied qualities that were also very desirable for armed vessels: speed, force, marksmanship, and the ability to control spaces.[149] The falcons on water not only show once again that contemporaries perceived the birds' hunting flights through a military lens; they also helped to reinforce these belligerent associations in the heads of seamen and readers.

Overall, the connection between falconry, courts, and rulership was firmly established in Europe's printed public sphere of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the next chapter, I will argue that this is one reason why falcons began to play an increasingly ambivalent role in the emerging 'critical public sphere' of the European Enlightenment, within which Moser's ironic remarks on the painted favourite falcons in princely residences can be situated.[150]

Rulers and Raptors: Falcons in Courtly Europe, 1600–1793. Nadir Weber, Oxford University Press.
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[146] Ibid., p. 481. A similar statement can be found in Martens' *Einleitung in das positive Europäische Völkerrecht* (1796), p. 198, who also refers to the gift falcons when discussing presents among rulers and states. On the reinterpretation of the intercultural diplomatic gift exchange around 1800, see Windler, *La diplomatie comme expérience de l'autre*, pp. 536–48.

[147] In France, some warships were called *Faucon* and *Emerillon* (merlin falcon). In England, no less than thirteen warships called *Falcon* were constructed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Colledge/Warlow, *Ships of the Royal Navy*, pp. 137–8.

[148] See *La Gazette*, no. 29, 17 July 1723, p. 340.

[149] See Acerra, 'La symbolique des noms de navires de guerre', p. 49. Eagles, tigers, and panthers also served as name-givers for the ships of the Royal Navy.

[150] Here in the sense of Habermas' famous book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Contrary to Habermas' interpretation, however, the spheres of the court and the bourgeois public were never clearly separated, and the critical discourse of enlightened authors such as Moser did not exclude them from holding state office. See Gestrich, *Absolutismus und Öffentlichkeit*.

6
Descent and Fall

On the morning of 4 May 1789, King Louis XVI left his residence to join the ceremonial procession on the occasion of the opening of the General Estates on the following day. While the deputies of the Three Estates were already waiting in the church of Notre-Dame in Versailles, where a solemn Mass of the Holy Spirit was to take place, the king and many high-ranking members of his court drove through the streets of the residential city, watched by numerous spectators at the roadside. According to the *Gazette de France*, which reported extensively on the event, the king's 'ceremonial coach was preceded by detachments of his *Gardes-du-Corps* and the *Vol du Cabinet*, led by the Chevalier de Forget, General Commander of the falconries of the Cabinet du Roi.'[1] In duty bound, the official newspaper praised the perfect order and rich décor of the hundreds of human and non-human participants in the public processions before and after the Mass. Yet, in the eyes of critical observers at the roadside, the parade on 4 May seemed less glorious. Speaking of the royal falcons that preceded the royal coach on the fists of their falconers, Jean Pierre Frédéric Ancillon (1767–1837), descendant of a Huguenot family that had been expulsed from France a century before, commented in a letter to a friend in Geneva that 'the poor animals looked quite astonished about being taken to Notre-Dame'.[2]

In fact, this would turn out to be the last major public appearance of the king's cabinet falconry in France. Three years later, the cabinet falconry in Montainville definitively closed its doors. Almost simultaneously, not only revolutionary France, but also the emperor in Vienna and all other German princes ceased to fly their raptors. By 1795, the age of courtly falconry had ended almost everywhere in Europe, with the notable exception of Portugal. Furthermore, unlike other activities of European court culture, falconry was not reactivated during the Restoration period. Why was there such a rapid and definitive decline? As we have already seen, the gun hypothesis cannot explain the decline of falconry, at least at the top level. The peak of courtly falconry in Europe was reached decades after the rise of more accurate hunting guns. Nevertheless, several intertwined developments of the eighteenth century favoured the rapid

[1] *Gazette de France*, 12 May 1789, p. 173. The escort of the royal falconers and their birds was also mentioned in the description of the royal return to the castle and of the following day's procession to the opening of the General Estates, ibid. p. 174.

[2] Quoted in Lefebvre and Terroine, eds, *Recueil de documents*, vol. I, p. 129.

disappearance of this hunting practice after 1790. As I will show in this chapter, the image of trained falcons changed fundamentally in the enlightened natural history discourse, transforming them from a model of loyal subjects into a symbol of subjugation or corruption. Moreover, the expensive, import-dependent hunting practice was increasingly questioned for economic reasons. While ceremonial constraints guaranteed the continuation of falconry until the 1780s, the decline came even more rapidly under the pressure of revolution and the need to reinvent the monarchy.

6.1 Changing Views of Falcons in the Enlightenment

In the course of the eighteenth century—the Age of Enlightenment—the perception of animals in the European discourse underwent fundamental changes.[3] The discussion of the animals' sensitivity and capacity for suffering laid the ethical foundations for the animal welfare movement of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, living beings increasingly became the object of scientific experiments and zootechnical visions of perfection. Animals were now simultaneously considered sentient subjects and useful resources. The relationship between these two poles of perception differed according to species, group, or even individual. The cat, for example, was elevated from a stray animal seen as false and unfaithful, but tolerated as a mouser, to a companion animal and symbol of enlightenment.[4] At the same time, discussions of agricultural writers on cattle took a very different direction, focusing on questions of how to increase performance in terms of labour power, milk output, and meat quantity—debates that went hand in hand with radical eradication programmes for 'pests'.[5] The cognitive dissonance that was to shape the relationship with non-human animals in modernity took on sharper contours.[6]

In the context of these shifting discourses, the image of falcons also underwent a little-noticed but far-reaching change.[7] It is true that the position of raptors had always been ambivalent in the bestiary of values, as we have seen in the first chapter. Around the mid-eighteenth century, however, the behavioural characteristics of the adaptive, pugnacious birds, long praised as perfect noble subjects and still a symbol of princely power in Germany, were disenchanted and received a much

[3] See, among others, Keith, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 242–303; Senior, *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Enlightenment*; Robbins, *Elephant Slaves*; Tague, *Animal Companions*; Breittruck, *Ein Flügelschlag in der Pariser Aufklärung*.

[4] Hengerer, 'Die Katze in der Frühen Neuzeit', pp. 82–8.

[5] Nisly-Goretzki, 'Agricultural Intensification'; Windelen, 'Mäuse, Maden, Maulwürfe'.

[6] See Ritvo, 'On the Animal Turn', pp. 119–20.

[7] This change has been largely overlooked in previous literature on the cultural history of falcons. Both Macdonald, *Falcon*, and Beck/Rémy, *Le faucon*, skip the Enlightenment period in their discussions.

more negative evaluation in the discourse of French naturalists. This re-evaluation ultimately prepared the field for a revolutionary discourse that declared hooded falcons to be 'poor animals' or even denounced them as emblems of the oppressive *ancien régime*.

A starting point from which we can observe this shift is the work of the eminent scholar and academic René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur (1683–1756). Although he would arguably never have seen himself as a vehicle of an oppositional political discourse,[8] his widely noticed experiments with living raptors contributed to the de-mystification of this symbol of royal power. In the late 1740s, the naturalist, who had extremely varied interests, ranging from metalworking and porcelain production to temperature measurement and the characteristics of shells and insects, turned his attention to the study of birds. In his extensive treatises on the techniques of hatching and rearing 'domestic birds', published between 1749 and 1751, birds of prey appear in various places as a source of danger for his chickens, but also as animals that could in principle be domesticated. A falcon that was hatched and raised together with poultry, Réaumur assumed, would probably no longer pose any threat to them.[9]

In autumn 1752, the naturalist presented the results of his experiments on the digestion of living birds of prey to his colleagues at the Académie Royale des Sciences. Inspired by falconry treatises that reported the vomiting of undigested matter by falcons, Réaumur repeatedly fed a bird of prey meat and other ingredients through tin tubes to see what kind of food was digested (only meat) and in what way birds of prey digested it (with gastric juice, not with muscular strength).[10] Although Réaumur had used a captured 'buzzard of a large species' for his experiment,[11] who died after a short time, his results were soon connected with falcons in the European scientific discourse. In his widely read *Principles of the Physiology of the Human Body*, the polymath Albrecht von Haller, for example, referred to the 'small tubes filled with meat that a wise man made a falcon swallow' in order to draw his own conclusions about digestion in the human body.[12] Réaumur's experiments not only turned birds of prey into largely passive objects of scientific investigation, but also underlined their predatory 'nature'. The raptors' physiological inability to digest anything other than meat pushed them into constant hunting.

[8] On Réaumur and his contexts, see Terrall, *Catching Nature*.

[9] Réaumur, *Art de faire éclore et d'élever en toute saison des oiseaux domestiques* (1749), vol. 2, pp. 235–6, and on the danger of raptors, ibid., p. 109.

[10] Réaumur, 'Observations sur la digestion des oiseaux, Second Mémoire: De la manière dont elle se fait dans l'estomac des Oiseaux de proie' (1752, published in 1756). For an explicit reference to falconry treatises, see ibid., p. 463.

[11] Ibid., p. 464.

[12] Haller, *Anfangsgründe der Phisiologie des menschlichen Körpers* (1774), vol. 6, p. 465. See also ibid., pp. 453, 467–8, 475, where Haller refers to Réaumur's 'falcon'. The work in question is the German translation of Haller's *Elementa Physiologiae Corporis Humani*, published between 1757 and 1766.

However, it was precisely this constant craving for fresh meat that drove the falcons into the hands of humans—potentially making them a symbol not only for the exploitation of other, more peaceful creatures, but also for the loss of freedom. Thus, in his articles on falconry for Diderot's and d'Alembert's era-defining *Encyclopédie*, the natural philosopher Charles-Georges Leroy provided far more than a summary of natural history and hunting knowledge. The *lieutenant des chasses* in the parc of Versailles had a constant intellectual exchange with the notorious *philosophes* d'Holbach and Helvétius and was known for his sensory-behavioural studies of animals. For the readers of the *Encyclopédie*, Leroy described the taming process of the captured falcons in detail and then noted:

> This exercise often lasts three days and three nights in succession. It is rare that at the end of this time span the needs which torment it [i.e. the bird], and the deprivation of sight (*lumière*), do not make him lose any idea of freedom (*liberté*). We can see that he has forgotten his natural pride when he easily allows his head to be covered, and, when he is uncovered, seizes the pastry or meat which we are careful to present to him from time to time.[13]

Submerged as it is under a mass of zoological-technical information, readers may overlook, or think nothing more of, the use of such key concepts of the Enlightenment discourse as *lumière* and *liberté*. However, anyone who read the article on the '*Chasse au vol*' in addition to the article on 'Falconry', which not only dealt with the same subject but was also written by the same author, could not help but recognize some political allusions in it:

> It is difficult to understand how animals who are naturally as free as birds of prey become, in a short time span, tame enough to listen to the voice of the hunter who guides them, when they are in the highest parts of the sky, to be attentive to the movements of the lure, to return to it and to allow themselves to be taken back. It is by alternately awakening and satisfying their needs that one succeeds in making them taste slavery; their love of freedom, which continues to fight for some time, yields at last to the violence of their appetite; as soon as they have eaten from the hunter's fist, they can almost be regarded as subjected.[14]

It is well known that the *Encyclopédie* deliberately used a game of cross-references, multiple articles on the same subject and implicit allusions to circumvent censorship.[15] The same strategies could also protect its authors, who wanted to

[13] Charles-Georges Leroy, art. 'Fauconnerie', *Encylopédie*, ed. Diderot/d'Alembert, vol. 6 (1751), pp. 430–2, quote p. 431. On Leroy and his articles on falconry, see also above, Chapter 3.3, pp. 110–14.

[14] Leroy, art. 'Chasse au vol', *Encylopédie*, ed. Diderot/d'Alembert, vol. 17 (1765), pp. 440–1, quote p. 440.

[15] On the methods for voicing criticism in the *Encyclopédie*, see, for instance, the overview in Cernuschi et al., eds, *Oser l'Encyclopédie*, pp. 57–70.

participate in socio-political criticism without giving up their positions. Therefore, a metaphoric-political intention in Leroy's interpretation of falcons as unfree slaves is plausible. However, if Leroy deliberately used the sharp contrast of freedom and slavery to establish the fate of the falcons as a metaphor to describe and—in line with contemporary political authors such as Montesquieu—quietly criticize absolute monarchy, there was still the question of who the birds of prey actually represented. Based on the early modern descriptions of falcons and their function in emblems touched on in Chapters 1 and 5, I would argue that it was not the common subjects of the king of France, let alone the enslaved people from other parts of the world, who were alluded to here.[16] It seems more likely that Leroy and Buffon, who quoted Leroy's statement about the falcons' loss of liberty in full in his *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux* (1770),[17] had in mind the French nobility and, possibly, the *parlements*. These once powerful players had been integrated into the increasingly centralized monarchical system less by force than by the lure of additional social privileges and pecuniary advantages during the previous century. Now, under King Louis XV, they returned to the political debates, claiming the role of 'intermediary powers' or even 'voices of the nation'.[18]

By presenting the raptors as self-enslaved noble beings, the natural philosophers of the French enlightenment could draw on an already established critical vision of falcons in anti-court discourses. In the Dutch Republic, which successfully marketed falcons and falconry know-how to the courts of Europe, authors such as the poet Roemer Visscher (1547–1620) had used the example of the falcon as early as the early seventeenth century to warn against the danger of being seduced by the corrupt courts (Figure 6.1):

> A falcon, who is of a wild nature, is said to be so pleased with the delicious food offered by the court, that when he flies freely in the sky, he comes back to his bonds, and is shut up in the dark cage, and covered with a cap. So are the nobles who are called to the court and, though they see the evils of the court, cannot stay away from it. So is, too, the wild falcon who, to his own sorrow, takes the place of honour at his lord's side.[19]

In this view, the luxurious accommodation and public performance of the falcons during princely hunts were splendid, but at the same time underlined their subjection to the will of the sovereign—as was also the case with the high nobility and their obedience to the courtly ceremonial. The complaints under Louis XIII that the nobility was 'lured' to the court with promises and pensions can also be

[16] On the recurrent motif of 'animal slavery' in eighteenth-century natural history texts and its meanings, see Robbins, *Elephant Slaves*, ch. 7.

[17] Buffon, *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*, vol. 1 (1770), pp. 197–9 (note).

[18] See Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, esp. pp. 67–103; Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris*, p. 364.

[19] Visscher, *Sinnepoppen* (1614), p. 87.

Figure 6.1 *Degeneres animi procerum quid quaeritis aulas*, etching from Roemer Visscher's *Sinnepoppen*(Amsterdam, 1614, p. 87)
Source: Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht, OCLC-no. 65535332.

seen in this line of reasoning, for which falconry provided a powerful metaphor.[20] Some decades later, the theorist of the powerful monarchical Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes, was confronted with the critique of claiming that a falcon, being held firmly in the hands of her master, was still free because she had wings to fly.[21] Already before the eighteenth century, the precarious freedom of the falcons was thus an established trope in the political-moral discussion. However, Réaumur's findings on the constraints of the stomach and Leroy's observations on the gradual 'enslavement' of the falcons led to an even more fundamental question, namely whether there was any escape from the freedom trap at all.

Not all authors were as pessimistic about the falcons' ability to maintain or regain their freedom as Réaumur and Leroy. The naturalist George-Louis Clerc, comte de Buffon (1707–1788) alluded to a slightly more optimistic perspective in

[20] See above, Chapter 5.1, p. 170.
[21] See Hobbes, *Questions concerning Liberty* (1656), no. XVIII, pp. 340 (objection by John Bramhall) and 342 (answer by Thomas Hobbes). See also ibid., no. XXXIII, pp. 392 and 402.

the first volume of his *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*. The much-celebrated director of the Jardin du Roi in Paris was careful not to openly side with the opposition to royal power that was forming loudly around the *parlement* of Paris at the time of the volume's publication (1770).[22] As his swan article that opened with a remark on the 'gentle authority of kings' in contrast to the violence of tyrants or his famous juxtaposition of the despotic tiger and the just lion, Buffon's falcon article could also be read as a covert political commentary.[23] Thus, inclined readers could see the statements Buffon added to the extensive quotation of Leroy's article as an indication of the nobility's and, possibly, the entire French nation's ability to regenerate:

> They are bound, constrained, garnished, and even deprived of light and food, in order to make them more dependent, more docile, and to add to their natural vivacity the impetuosity of their needs; but they serve out of necessity, out of habit, and without attachment; they remain captives, without becoming servants.[24]

In Buffon's view, therefore, the falcons' natural freedom was not restricted by the practice of taming or by their services for humans. Instead, he maintained that if 'the individual alone is a slave, the species is always free, and is always equally distant from the empire of man'.[25] Due to this natural disposition, regaining freedom—or independence—always remained a possibility. Consequently, his chapter was illustrated with representations of wild falcons without hoods, bells, or other signs of human domination (Figure 6.2).

The statements by the naturalists show that falcons played a vital role in the bestiary of the French Enlightenment. On the eve of the Revolution, the symbolic status of the birds of prey, which were most readily associated with the social class of the nobility, fluctuated between greedy predators, deplorable slaves, and personifications of a natural freedom that resisted all attempts at rule and domestication. What all these images had in common, however, was that they viewed the practice of falconry, based on the deprivation of the *lumière* and a politics of the stomach, in a much more critical light. This re-evaluation of falconry by enlightened naturalists coincided with interventions by economists and critique by rural subjects who challenged the practice of courtly falconry in the eighteenth century—provoking cuts and reforms even in the falconry-obsessed German princely society.

[22] On this context, see Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris*.

[23] On the hidden political messages in Buffon's writings, see, e.g., Robbins, *Elephant Slaves*, p. 186, and on his publication strategies in general, Loveland, *Rhetoric and Natural History*; Levacher, *Buffon et ses lecteurs*.

[24] Buffon, *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*, vol. 1 (1770), pp. 198–9.

[25] Ibid.

Figure 6.2 Illustration of a white gyrfalcon in Buffon's *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*, coloured engraving by François Nicolas Martinet, 1770

Source: Buffon, *Histoire naturelle des oiseaux*, vol. 1, 1770, fig. 446/BnF Gallica, id. no. ark:/12148/btv1b86246042.

6.2 Falconry Economics and Reforms in Germany

At some Protestant courts, which tended to practise a more frugal lifestyle, financial considerations prompted the princes to reduce or completely cease falconry already early in the eighteenth century. The court of Württemberg, for example, had already temporarily closed its falconry at the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession to save money, and then closed it definitively after a brief revival between 1710 and 1714.[26] At the English royal court, the falconry had been closed down after the demise of King William III of Orange in 1702 and was not re-established under the House of Hannover—only at the court of the heir to the throne, the Prince of Wales, a smaller falconry seems to have been maintained.[27]

[26] Wagner, *Das Jagdwesen in Württemberg*, p. 374.

[27] Icelandic falcons were presented to the Prince of Wales on a few occasions in the eighteenth century. See, e.g., 'Allerunterthänigste ohnvorgreifliche Repartition über die in diesem Jahre 1743 von Eisland erhaltenen Falcken', DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.643, Lit. Xf., no. 12,

And the 'soldier king' Frederick William I of Prussia, who had still mourned the death of a falcon with a tomb monument in 1714, dismissed his falconers in 1730 and then forwarded gifted gyrfalcons from Denmark directly to his son-in-law in Ansbach, the 'wild margrave', Carl Wilhelm Friedrich von Brandenburg.[28] The King of Prussia preferred to spend his money on recruits rather than on fragile foreign falcons that required intensive care.

Frederick William's son and successor, King Frederick II ('the Great') of Prussia, not only discontinued the practice of falconry. He even stopped hunting altogether, which in his view was an expensive waste of time that caused unnecessary animal suffering.[29] By dissolving the previously largely unquestioned nexus between hunting practice and military virtues, the celebrated—or at least feared—*roi connétable* shaped a new ruler's habitus that would inspire younger monarchs in the Holy Roman Empire and beyond. Frederick's example also motivated authors close to the state to increasingly critical comments on princely hunting, including falconry. Thus, the Bavarian court advocate, agricultural economist, and forestry expert Simon Rottmanner (1740–1813) quoted at length 'the royal author of the *Antimachiavell*' to underline his criticism of excessive hunting and game keeping.[30] According to Rottmanner's cameralistic perspective, princes should use their forests for extensive wood production rather than for the protection und multiplication of deer or wild boars that destroyed the subjects' crops.

If participants of this critical-reformist discourse in Germany mentioned falcons at all, they usually subsumed them under the category of harmful 'predatory animals' (*Raubthiere*). For the renowned cameralistic author Johann Friedrich von Pfeiffer (1717–1787), who published a handbook for forestry science in 1780, falcons and goshawks fell into the same group as bears, wolves, foxes, otters, crows, owls, 'and the like'—wild animals that posed serious problems to farmers, fishermen, or hunters.[31] Arguing from the same point of view, Pfeiffer's younger colleague Johann Heinrich Jung (1740–1817) gave his readers the following recommendation in a chapter dedicated to 'hunting management':

> The forester must try to exterminate the predatory birds by destroying their nests during the breeding season, and wherever he encounters such a raptor, he

proposing to send ten gyrfalcons to the Prince of Wales, and the correspondence between Copenhagen and London on the subject from 1744 to 1746 in ibid., 333.644, Lit. Xn.

[28] Dreyer, 'Die landesherrliche Falknerei in Preußen', p. 91; Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, pp. 22–5.

[29] See Rutz, 'Wilde Tiere', pp. 357–9.

[30] Rottmanner, *Nothwendige Kenntniße und Erläuterungen* (1780), foreword, with reference to vol. 1, p. 221, in Frederick's treatise. For the context, see Knoll, *Umwelt—Herrschaft—Gesellschaft*, pp. 168–98.

[31] Pfeiffer, *Grundriss der Forstwissenschaft* (1781), p. 168. On the connections between hunting, forestry, and cameral science, see Berni, 'Von der höfischen Prunkjagd zur weidgerechten Pirsch'.

> must shoot it down. Incidentally, all these birds have little or nothing in them from which the forester can make money.[32]

Although Jung added that 'some species of these [predatory birds], such as falcon and hawk species', could also be used for falconry, he clearly attributed a negative role to them as 'predatory birds' (*Raubvögel*). It is unlikely that this negative image would have gone unnoticed by members of the aspiring, reform-minded bourgeoisie who were preparing for state service. Probably, an even wider audience adopted this new view on falcons and hawks, which also found its way into the metaphor repertoire of the contemporary literature and theatre. In John Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), for example, an analogy is drawn between a hawk devouring a pet bird that has flown out of its cage and a male protagonist attempting to 'consume' a young woman.[33] And a satirical play by Emanuel Schikaneder, who later wrote the libretto for Mozart's *Magic Flute*, announced its critical view of greed and the abuse of power by a privileged few right from the title: *Die Raubvögel*.[34]

In this context, it is probably no coincidence that the same period saw an increase in complaints from rural subjects about the damage caused directly or indirectly by princely hunting. Although such complaints were primarily directed at the *chasse à courre* and the so-called 'closed hunts', for which big game was kept in large areas, the practice of falconry also provoked criticism from below. For example, in summer 1782, an Austrian community complained that imperial falconers had caused great damage to their fields during the *Lustbeiz* when they followed the flying raptors on horseback.[35] For a reformist monarch like Emperor Joseph II (r. 1765/80–90) who, like his role model Frederick II, wanted to be 'loved' by the inhabitants of his countries,[36] this raised the question whether the pleasure of princely hunting was still worth so much time and money, given that it provoked the economists' frowns and the subjects' anger.

In the case of the falconry, Joseph II decided not to abandon the parties in Laxenburg, but to substantially reduce its costs. Year after year, in early summer, the falconers in Laxenburg were now urgently admonished to take 'useless' and 'superfluous' birds '*aus dem Aas*', that is, to remove them from the feeding list.[37] Moreover, in June 1785, the emperor instructed his falconry to refrain from

[32] Jung, *Versuch eines Lehrbuchs der Forstwissenschaft* (1782), vol. 2, p. 270.

[33] See Aronson, 'Ortolans, Partridges, and Pullets', p. 42.

[34] Schikaneder, *Die Raubvögel* (1783). The five-act satirical was first performed in Salzburg in 1782.

[35] See the report by the falconry's secretary Martschläger, Vienna, 21 January 1783, HHStA HA OJäA 857, Fasz. 13 (1783), no. 1. According to Martschläger, the community of Weinkendorf had repeatedly complained, most recently in the summer of 1782, whereupon the emperor had commissioned a report.

[36] See Frevert, *Gefühlspolitik*.

[37] See, e.g., Martschläger to the falconers in Laxenburg, Vienna, 15 June 1778, HHStA HA OJäA 857, Fasz. 8 (1778), no. 43. The various 'parties' in Laxenburg now also had to regularly draw up lists

buying 'foreign birds' (*'fremde Vögel'*). Instead of relying on 'itinerant falconers', who went to trap gyrfalcons in Norway or to purchase peregrine falcons at auctions in Valkenswaard at high prices, the falconry was ordered to let only 'native' peregrine falcons, 'blue feet', sparrow hawks, and goshawks from the territories of the monarchy—especially from Hungary—fly for the court.[38] These instructions were not only aimed at reducing costs, but also corresponded with the patriotic discourses that had been increasingly mobilized since the Seven Years War.

However, at the intervention of his *Obristfalkenmeister* Count Saint Julien, Emperor Joseph II later reversed his decision to renounce the Icelandic gyrfalcons. In spring 1786, Saint Julien explained in a detailed 'most subservient' memorandum that the gyrfalcons were clearly superior performers compared to the native peregrine falcons and 'blue feet'. The emperor's entertainment at the falconry party in Laxenburg, scheduled for the summer, would be in jeopardy if he continued to refuse the qualities and power of the Icelanders.[39] In the conflict between austerity and patriotism, on the one hand, and the concern for the reputation of his falconry, on the other, the Austrian ruler decided against the ceremonial risk. As a result, gift falcons once again arrived annually from Copenhagen, for which the imperial envoy delivered several dozens of bottles of Tokay wine to the Danish king in return.

Nevertheless, the emperor continued to keep an eye on his expensive court falconry. The annual budget for the purchase and transportation of new gyrfalcons was reduced to 1,030 guilders, which had to be personally approved by the emperor every year.[40] Moreover, in 1787, Joseph II commissioned a report on the staff development of the falconry since 1765.[41] As a result, some positions were no longer reoccupied. Instead of the original four, the imperial falconry now consisted of only three independent 'parties' led by falcon masters: a heron party, a kite and hare party, and a crow and *Revier* party.[42]

Despite these cuts, the imperial falconry remained strikingly active during the last few years of its existence. In September 1790, nine months after Joseph II's

of the animals in the falconry and send them to the court for better control, but unfortunately these lists have not been preserved.

[38] Saint-Julien to the falconer Jean Thoms in Valkenswaard, Vienna, 26 June 1785, HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 15 (1785), no. 39. See also ibid., nos 46–9.

[39] 'Allerunterthänigste Note' to Emperor Joseph II, signed by the Count of Saint-Julien, Vienna, 29 May 1786, HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 16 (1786), no. 26, with a handwritten 'placet' by Joseph II.

[40] See HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 17 (1787), no. 4; Fasz. 18 (1788), no. 10; Fasz. 19 (1789), no. 10; Fasz. 20 (1790), no. 20); Fasz. 21 (1791), no. 16; Fasz. 22 (1792), no. 17. In 1789, the sum was not spent because there was no falcon hunt that year.

[41] A draft of the report, written by the falconry secretary Martschläger and submitted to the chief falconer Saint-Julien, can be found in HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 17 (1787), no. 8, dated Vienna, 15 May 1787.

[42] In 1789, following the retirement of the heron master Philipp Wüst, an exchange took place, by which, among other things, the position of a 'sub-master for hare birds' ('Untermeister für Hasenvögel') was cut in order to reduce costs; see HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 19 (1789), no. 13, letter to the emperor, dated Vienna, 1 July 1789.

sudden death, the new Emperor Leopold II hosted a magnificent falconry party in Laxenburg, the occasion being the visit of the King of Naples and Sicily and the wedding celebrations of the Austrian heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Joseph Karl, and Maria Theresa of Naples and Sicily. On this occasion, the court falconers received a generous gratuity from the eminent guest, King Ferdinand III/IV of Naples and Sicily.[43] As late as 27 June 1793—a few weeks before the closure of the falconry—the *Obristfalkenmeister* Count Saint Julien applied to Emperor Francis II for the usual sum of 1,030 guilders for the acquisition of the northern gyrfalcons, without which, he argued, the next spring hunt could not be carried out properly.[44] Even when the Emperor replied that 'the ordering and reception of the Icelandic falcons should be discontinued this year',[45] there was still little to indicate an imminent end to falconry as a whole. Rather, the reply inscribed itself in a years-long policy in which the imperial falconry corps was under pressure to provide the same service at a lower cost.

This increased pressure for economic efficiency had also led to cost savings in falconries at other German and European courts in the second half of the eighteenth century. The case of Margrave Carl Wilhelm Friedrich of Ansbach, whose oversized court falconry contributed significantly to the large debts and near bankruptcy of his state, probably served as a warning sign. Already during the lifetime of the 'Wild Margrave', the personnel budget, which had reached an absolute peak in 1750 with over fifty falconers, had to be reduced in view of the state's desolate financial situation, and under his son and successor Frederick (r. 1757–1806), the princely falconry corps continuously shrank to thirty-one (1760), twelve (1770), nine (1780), and finally six (1790) active court falconers.[46] In Bavaria, the courtly falconry was severely downsized in the first years of the reign of Elector Maximilian III Joseph (r. 1745–77).[47] In Saxony, the new elector Friedrich August III (r. 1763–1806), whose lands had been hit hard by the Seven Years War, disbanded his late father's falconry corps altogether in November 1763.[48]

[43] On the meticulous preparation for this event, see the documentation in HHStA HA OJäA 858, Fasz. 20 (1790), nos 40–3; on the distribution of the King of Naples and Sicily's gratuites among the falconers, see ibid., Fasz. 21 (1791), no. 4, dated 17 March 1791.

[44] Saint Julien to Emperor Francis II, Vienna, 27 June 1793, HHStA HA OJäA 859, Fasz. 23 (1793), no. 46.

[45] Ibid., marginal decree signed by Emperor Francis II.

[46] See Lindner, *Ein Ansbacher Beizbüchlein*, pp. 16–17; on the financial consequences, ibid., pp. 15, 29, 50.

[47] Seidenader, *Kulturgeschichte der Falknerei*, vol. 3, pp. 1977 ff. In 1750, the falconry house near Munich in 1750 was abandoned, and some of the gifted falcons from Denmark were now given away. However, the office of *(Vice-)Oberstfalkenmeister* was retained, and several court falconers still appear on payment lists under the Elector Karl Theodor, which indicates that falconry was still practised in some castles such as Lichtenberg.

[48] See Berge, 'Die Falknerei am Dresdner Hofe', p. 71, and HStAD, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, No. Loc. 00884/08, fol. 91r–97r. Already since 1756, falconry had not been practised at the Saxon Court that had to leave the capital for a time. The dissolution of the Saxon falconry was decided on 13 November 1763 in order to save the annual sum of 9,226 Reichsthaler.

On a European scale, the suppression of court falconry in Spain under the Bourbon King Ferdinand VI in 1748 also fits into this trend.[49] Nevertheless, there were also cases in Germany and in other regions of the continent where falconry was further developed during the same period. For example, the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel and the King of Portugal decided to expand their falconries in the decades after 1750. Therefore, it seems not appropriate to claim a linear decline of this form of hunting after the mid-eighteenth century. Instead, we can observe an increase of discursive and financial pressure on this hunting practice, with different effects at different courts. Perhaps against all expectations, the most illustrious example of the persistence of Baroque falconry remains France. As mentioned in the *Encyclopédie*, the hunt with trained raptors was hardly practised by the kings anymore. Nevertheless—and despite the criticism by naturalists and economists—a 'very excellent' falconry continued to exist until the last heartbeats of the *ancien régime*.[50]

6.3 The 'Perpetuum Mobile' of Court Life in France

If we want to know the reasons for this apparent paradox of royal disinterest and courtly persistence in falconry, we must look at the specific functioning of the French court, where the decision-making power of individual sovereigns was comparatively limited. Norbert Elias had already observed that under Louis XIV's successors the court was gradually transformed from an instrument of power into a gilded cage not only for the nobility but also for the monarch. The seemingly absolute kings themselves became prisoners of a 'ghostly perpetuum mobile'.[51] Recent scholarship has argued that the continuity of courtly structures and routines over the decades was due less to the inbuilt constraints of ceremonial than to the interests of the court nobility, who had often paid dearly for their positions at the high court and thus insisted on their privileges.[52] Furthermore, the example of falconry shows that diplomacy also contributed to the maintenance of seemingly anachronistic institutions such as the falconry of the royal cabinet.

Under Louis XV, falconry in France had gradually lost its status as a privileged royal hunting form, and this situation did not change under his successor Louis XVI. In 1739, the courtier Charles Philippe d'Albert, duc de Luynes (1695–1758)—a great-great grandson of Louis XIII's favourite-falconer—noted in his diary 'that

[49] Martínez Millán, 'La reforma de las casas reales'.
[50] Leroy, art. 'Fauconnerie', *Encyclopédie*, ed. Diderot/d'Alembert, vol. 6, p. 430.
[51] Elias, *Die Höfische Gesellschaft*, p. 352. Elias uses the metaphor of the perpetual motion machine in several places to describe the disciplining effect of the courtly ceremonial machinery, which was driven by competition for power and prestige; see ibid., pp. 149, 153, 225.
[52] Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones*, pp. 203–16.

the falconry equipage already presented itself two or three times, as is the rule and custom, but the king [Louis XV], who does not like this hunt, sent it back each time'.[53] Two years later, De Luynes reported that the king flew falcons at Versailles, but he did so, according to the courtier, 'only out of a kind of necessity, to keep up appearances, for he does not love it at all'.[54] Later he recorded that the king usually flew with the falcons of the grand and cabinet falconry once a year in order to fulfil his duty and then dismissed the assembled equipages.[55] Only occasionally—as in May 1743, when the king went falcon hunting with his mistress and her two sisters, the young dauphin, and his daughters, or in April 1746, when the new *maîtresse en titre*, Madame de Pompadour, accompanied the king for a falconry trip—was this event worth a more detailed description.[56] Following his grandfather's hunting preferences, Louis XVI recorded only one falcon hunt per year in his personal hunting diary after his accension to the throne in 1774.[57] However, as outlined in Chapter 5.3, this loss of royal interest in falconry was partly offset by the continued involvement of the queens, princesses, and royal mistresses, who now had an increasing influence on the allocation of offices in the royal falconries.

The court offices associated with this hunt remained a most valuable resource that had to be preserved or even newly won from the courtiers' point of view. With the *survivance*, the practice of acquiring court offices for large sums and having them transferred to a male successor during the lifetime of their 'owner', these offices and the privileges associated with them had become quasi-hereditary in France. Only the extinction of the male line of a family opened up opportunities for change. When this happened to the Desmarets in 1748, Louis XV ordered the *Grande Fauconnerie* to be considerably reduced by forty-five members before he agreed to hand over the office of *grand fauconnier* to Madame de Pompadour's protégé, the Duc de La Vallière.[58] As the post of grand falconer was a *grand office*, attentive courtiers like De Luynes paid great attention to the events that lay between the death of the predecessor in office to La Vallières' first public appearance as grand falconer.[59] When La Vallière passed away in 1780 without a direct

[53] Luynes, *Mémoires*, vol. II, p. 388, Versailles, 17 March 1739.
[54] Ibid., vol. III, p. 369, Versailles, 17 April 1741.
[55] Ibid., vol. V, p. 10, 12 May 1743.
[56] Ibid., vol. V, p. 18, 21 May 1743, and vol. VII, p. 292, 25 April 1746.
[57] See the handwritten 'Journal de chasse de Louis XVI', AN, AE II 1281, according to which the king conducted one falcon hunt per year until 1787.
[58] The reduction was justified on the grounds that the officers concerned—23 *gentilshommes de la Grande Fauconnerie*, 20 *picqueurs de l'équipage du vol pour corneille*, and the offices of surgeon and apothecary of the *Grande Fauconnerie*—no longer rendered any real service. In addition, the king decreed that he would himself appoint several leading positions in the falconry in the future, which reduced the status of the *grand fauconnier*. See the royal decision in AN, O^1 977, no. 135, dated Versailles, May 1748, and the new *État* of the *Grande Fauconnerie* in ibid., no. 136, according to which the Grand falconry now consisted of only sixty-four members instead of 109 as in 1719.
[59] See Luynes, *Mémoires*, vol. 9, pp. 17 (27 April 1748, on the death of Demarets), 202 (the same day, concerning several requests of high nobles for the succession as *grand fauconnier*), 32–3 (8 May, on La Vallière's nomination for the office), 33–4 (10 May, on the cuts in the falconry and the

heir, the *Grande Fauconnerie* was reformed again, the *gardes des aires* were dismissed, but continued to exist in a reduced form until 1787.[60] More importantly for the observing courtiers, Joseph Hyacinthe François de Paule, comte de Vaudreuil, the alleged lover of Marie Antoinette's *amie intime*, the duchesse de Polignac, now obtained the position of *grand fauconnier* thanks to the Queen's protection—which created some scandal at Versailles.[61]

By contrast, as shown in Chapter 4.4, the Forget family managed to pass the position of captain of the cabinet falconry from father to son until the end of the *ancien régime*. This quasi-dynastic continuity also allowed them to maintain the size and privileges of this falconry until the 1780s. Repeatedly, they successfully insisted on their prerogatives to personally present the disinterested king with the falcons' prey or to accompany him on journeys. When King Louis XV travelled to Fontainebleau in September 1737, Forget and the falconers of the cabinet falconry, who had apparently not been informed in advance, quickly joined him at Ponthierry and escorted him the remainder of his journey, referring to their privilege of accompanying the king on his travels.[62] Probably as a result of the interventions of the restless *capitaine général* of the cabinet falconry, Jean-Claude Forget, who held the office since 1704, this privilege was now explicitly listed and detailed in the printed *État de France*:

> The falconry of the king's cabinet alone follows His Majesty in his travels, even in the army. The *Sieur* Forget, who commands it, takes the king's orders every day on the road, or in the army, and flies every day at the door of the king's carriage, in the morning or in the evening, according to the orders he receives from His Majesty. In the army, he flies at the head of the convoy in which the king is marching.[63]

In order to ensure this, the manual stated almost in the manner of an instruction, the foreign minister should always arrange for the issuing of passports for the falconers in due time, so that they could always 'let the king's birds exercise freely'.[64] For every day of marching, the falconers were entitled to twelve bottles of table wine and sufficient bread, as well as accommodation in the king's quarter. With the same zeal, Jean-Claude's successors Jean-Claude II and Jean-Claude III de

appointments of the office), 42 (4 June, on the oath of office taken by La Vallière), 66 (23 July, on La Vallières' first presentation of the falcons caught in the kingdom), and 76 (12 July, on the fate of Desmaret's appartments at court).

[60] See Pinoteau, *Les chasses de Louis XVI*, p. 113.

[61] Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, pp. 637; Horowski, *Die Belagerung des Thrones*, p. 359.

[62] Luynes, *Mémoires*, vol. 1, p. 361, Fontainebleau, 29 September 1737.

[63] *L'État de France* (1749), vol. 1, pp. 330–1. The same privileges had already been recorded almost in identical wording in the printed *États de la France* of 1722, 1727, and 1736, but were not yet present in the *État de la France* of 1718 and the preceding publications.

[64] *L'État de France* (1749), vol. 1, p. 301.

Forget managed to save the cabinet falconry from major cuts until the outbreak of the Revolution. Although Louis XV and Louis XVI no longer had any use for their cabinet falcons, their presence was, as it were, imposed on them.

This 'siege of the royal throne' by the raptors and their noble falconers was further favoured by the practice of falcon tributes and diplomacy, which also continued like a clockwork. As the courtly diarists and the courtly gazettes occasionally noted, the *gardes des aires*, the Abbé de Saint-Hubert, and the envoys from Malta and Denmark saw no reason to interrupt the annual presentation of captured birds of prey to the king of France. The Duc de Luynes noted maliciously that most of the birds of prey that the royal guards brought to the court from the provinces were of little use and were killed immediately after being received.[65] As with the Abbé, however, the handover was an opportunity for interaction that was firmly scheduled in the court calendar and which the privileged subjects were not willing to let themselves be deprived of, especially as it was associated with counter-gifts.[66]

The primarily ceremonial character of falcon diplomacy under the late *ancien régime* is particularly evident in the episode reported by De Luynes, according to which the chevalier Champoléan, envoy of the Grand Master of Malta, had to borrow birds from the royal falconry for the public handover at Versailles on 6 February 1753 because all the falcons from Malta had already died during the journey or shortly after their arrival.[67] In the same entry, De Luynes noted that the royal courts of Spain and Portugal also received gift falcons from Malta and that the carriers of the raptors were rewarded, as in France, with sums of money or even military promotions. In order to maintain friendly relations with the king of Denmark, a central player in northern Europe, and to continue to present itself as a generous and potent court, Versailles therefore carried on receiving the gyrfalcons from Iceland with polite thanks and, from 1753 onwards, even with a new counter-gift: several thousand bottles of French wine.[68]

The moment to subject the barely practised falconry to a more radical reform only came when the financial problems of the French monarchy became blatantly obvious and were intensely debated and criticized in public. As part of the drastic cuts to the court budget in August 1787—at a time when the *assemblée des notables* had ushered in the 'pre-revolution'—King Louis XVI decided to abolish the office of *grand fauconnier* and its falconry altogether.[69] This decision was all the more convenient because the last *grand fauconnier*, the Comte de Vaudreuil, had

[65] Luynes, *Mémoires*, vol. 9, p. 66; Compiègne, 23 July 1748.
[66] Ibid., vol. 11, p. 194; Compiègne, 23 July 1751.
[67] Ibid., vol. 12, pp. 339–40. As Luynes noted, the carrier of the birds also received the usual gratuity of 1,000 livres.
[68] See above Chapter 2.1, note 10.
[69] *Règlement* of 9 August 1787, *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 1, p. 250, art. 5.

become very unpopular at court and in the wider public.[70] However, the 1787 reform not only concerned the grand falconry. In the same year, the *Petite Écurie* was merged with the *Grande Écurie* (thus significantly reducing the number of offices and horses), while the *Grande Louveterie* and several other hunting equipages were completely eliminated. The 'animal court' in Versailles thus became significantly smaller.[71] In this context, it is remarkable that the *fauconnerie du Cabinet du roi* was not abolished.

Nevertheless, the chevalier Jean-Claude III Marquis de Forget (1757–1792) was ordered on 9 August 1787 to reduce the number of falconers and falcons and to concentrate their activities on 'grand ceremonies'.[72] Filled with the desire to prove his family's ancient nobility, Forget had joined the Order of Saint John on Malta in 1776, where he served for two years (which is why his first title was *chevalier* instead of *marquis*). After his return to France, he joined the army as an officer and took up the court office of *capitaine de la fauconnerie du Cabinet du roi* of his late father in 1782. As early as December 1783, he compiled a lengthy treatise that provided information on the development of the cabinet falconry since its creation in the early seventeenth century and its special ceremonial task and prerogatives.[73] When it now became apparent that the Estates General of the Kingdom of France were to convene for the first time since 1614, he was anxious to secure a prominent place for himself and his falconry corps in the accompanying ceremonies.[74]

Thus, the prominent appearance of the cabinet falconers and their birds in the immediate proximity of the king at the great royal processions at the opening of the Estates General on 4 and 5 May 1789 mentioned at the beginning of this chapter was the product of prior internal negotiation processes and, from a courtly perspective, a symbolic triumph of the chevalier de Forget, who proudly rode ahead of them. Yet from the point of view of the revolutionary protagonists who would soon take over the reins, this last public appearance of the 'poor' hooded falcons only underlined their belonging to the *ancien régime*, which now had to

[70] See Newton, *Les chevaux et les chiens du roi*, pp. 637–8. Vaudreuil and the remaining falconers of the *Grande Fauconnerie* were compensated with pensions.

[71] Pieragnoli, *Le prince et les animaux*, pp. 251–4.

[72] See the letter by the *secrétaire de la Maison du Roi*, Louis Auguste le Tonnelier, Marquis de Breteuil, to Jean-Claude, Marquis de Forget, dated Versailles, 9 August 1787, BnF, site Arsenal, Fonds Forget, Ms 7877.

[73] 'Etat des pièces tirées des Archives de la Fauconnerie du Cabinet du Roy au mois de Décembre 1783', AN, O^1 977, no. 152, signed by Forget and dated Versailles, 9 December 1783.

[74] See Forget's 'Mémoire au Roy', dated November 1788, AN, O^1 977, no. 157, and a letter by Forget dated Versailles, 22 April 1789, ibid., no. 158. At the same time, Forget, as a member of the nobility of Paris, put forward some ideas of reform in view of the upcoming Estates General; see his 'Articles proposés à l'Assemblée de la Noblesse de la Ville et Vicomté de Paris. Pour être inserés lors de la Rédaction des Cahiers pour les Etats Generaux', dated April 1789, BnF, site Arsenal, Fonds Forget, Ms 7879. Among other things, Forget argued that the kingdom should pay off its debts and hold general assemblies every five years—whereby the prerogative of the clergy and nobility should be preserved.

be overcome. The dynamics unleashed would bring the practice of courtly falconry to an abrupt end, not only in France but throughout Europe.

6.4 The Sudden End of Courtly Falconry in Europe

The dissatisfaction with the 'feudal' regime of the French kingdom, which initially manifested itself in particular in the *cahiers de doléances* of communities of the Third Estate, was at first not specifically directed at the already considerably shrunken falconry. However, several petitions demanded that subjects should be allowed to use firearms or other means to 'kill wild and carnivorous animals, as well as the birds that are harmful to agriculture', which, in addition to crows or sparrows, could include birds of prey.[75] A significant part of the criticism was also directed against the court's and the nobility's practices of animal keeping, especially against the protection of deer and other large game animals in the royal parks and forests, which caused great damage to the peasants' crop, and against the privileges of the nobility to hunt and to maintain pigeon lofts.[76]

After the representatives of the *Tiers État* had declared themselves the National Assembly on 17 June 1789 and demanded a new constitution, the abolition of these former prerogatives was an important part of the radical decrees of 4–5 August 1789 that reversed central pillars of the previous political and social order. The fact that the royal court, which moved to Paris, now had to largely cease its hunts, and the 'great game massacre' that took place in the kingdom's forests and parks in August and early autumn, were also telling symbols of the abolition of the *ancien régime* and a foretaste of the violent events that were to unfold.[77] In the revolutionary struggle of words and images, birds of prey now became a cipher for the previously privileged, hated 'aristocrats'.[78] In the process, the association of falcons with loyal noble servants of princes or even the princes themselves, that had still been publicly enacted by the court at the opening of the Estates General and on several other occasions in May and June 1789,[79] were

[75] See *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 3, p. 365, 'Cahier des doléances, plaintes et remontrances de l'ordre du tiers-état du pays et comté de Bigorre', Demands of the communities, Art. 46.

[76] According to Philippe Salvadori, 62 per cent of the *cahiers de doléances* of the Third Estate referred to hunting as a problem; among the clergy and the nobility, it was the subject of about 25 per cent of the *cahiers*; see Salvadori, *La chasse*, p. 361. On the criticism and decline of royal hunting in the revolutionary period, see also Pinoteau, *Les chasses de Louis XVI*, part 3; for criticism of the pigeon lofts and *garennes* as symbols of noble prerogatives, see Grateau, *Les cahiers de doléances*, p. 126.

[77] Serna, *Comme des bêtes*, pp. 220–4.

[78] On the origins and meanings of the 'aristocrat', see, among others, Kaiser, 'Nobles into Aristocrats'.

[79] On 23 June 1789, King Louis XVI was still accompanied by his cabinet falcons on his way to the *séance royale*; see *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 8, p. 143.

entangled with existing negative connotations of predatory birds in agronomic discourses.

As early as autumn 1789, a pamphlet entitled *La chasse aux bêtes puantes et féroces* ('The hunt for stinking and ferocious beasts') appeared in the form of a fictitious government decree ordering that the malicious carnivorous animals widespread at court and in the surroundings of Paris should be hunted.[80] Among other things, readers were informed that

> A Bird of Prey, commonly known under the name of Duke (*le Duc*), & to which the name of Duc de Bourb[on] is pleasantly given, has taken flight through the cities of Brussels, Frankfurt & c. This bird, so cruel, does not fly without design in these cities. The sum of ten thousand livres [is to be awarded] to the one who will present it to us with its eyes gouged out.[81]

To ensure that everyone understood who was meant by the other tigers, panthers, foxes, raven, and various birds of prey, which had caused considerable damage and 'destroyed the hope of the workers', a list with the names of high noble emigrants and other protagonists of the *ancien régime* was printed in an appendix, demanding their execution. At the same time, an engraving circulated that visualized this 'hunt on the aristocrats' (Figure 6.3).[82]

Such martial metaphors associating nobles and counter-revolutionaries with birds of prey were not limited to the pens of a few anonymous pamphleteers, but were also used in the public parliamentary debates. In December 1791, the deputy Jean Duprat lamented in an emotional speech that the corpse of the murdered patriot L'Escuyer had been left in the street, where it had become 'a meal for birds of prey'.[83] In January 1792, the left parliamentarian Pierre Victurnien Vergniaud—in his fiery plea to declare war on the allied kings—complained amidst bravo calls that international financial speculators were feasting like raptors on the carcass of the national credit.[84] And some days later, his colleague Pierre-Édouard Velontey described immigrants from Holland as a danger to the new order, equally echoing the former discourse on 'foreign' falcons: 'I have no doubt that this cloud of foreign birds of prey has come to pelt down on revolutionary France.'[85]

[80] Anonymous, *La chasse aux bêtes puantes et féroces* (1789).

[81] Ibid., p. 6. The moderately original wordplay builds on the homonymy of duke (*le duc*, or *Monsieur le Duc* in the case of the Duke of Bourbon) and the eagle owls used for falconry (also called *le Duc*).

[82] On the role of animal figures in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary caricature, see Duprat, 'Ah le maudit animal!'.

[83] *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 36, p. 387, Assemblée nationale législative, session of 25 December 1791. The revolutionary administrator Nicolas-Jean-Baptiste Lescuyer had been killed by supporters of the Pope in a church in Avignon on 16 October 1791.

[84] *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 37, p. 491, session of 18 January 1791.

[85] *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 38, p. 16, session of 29 January 1792.

LA CHASSE AUX ARISTOCRATES
Air: Eveillez vous belle endormie &c.
A voir fair devant nos chasseurs
Rirons de leurs vaines clameurs,
Corbeaux, moinillons, bête fauve,
C'est la fermeté qui nous sauve.

Figure 6.3 *The Hunt on the Aristocrats*, coloured engraving, 1790. The noblemen, members of the old *parlements*, and clerics who are hunted by the bourgeois revolutionaries are accompanied and symbolised by two monkeys and an eagle owl—a bird of prey that was also used in falconry

Source: BnF Gallica, id. no. ark:/12148/btv1b69474772.

Thus, in contrast to pet birds that in revolutionary discourse—reinterpreting their role in the royal *sacre*—became symbols of the oppressed subjects and were now freed from their cages in pictures and texts,[86] the birds of prey were identified with the enemies of the revolution. Consequently, they were fought symbolically as well as with practical measures: republican agronomists and veterinarians such as François Hilaire Gilbert (1757–1800), who propagated a binary vision of the animal world that sharply distinguished between useful domesticated livestock and harmful wild animals, now declared war on wolves and all other predators.[87] Although no direct major impact on wild birds of prey populations in France has been documented, this paved the way for the more successful eradication campaigns against raptors in the nineteenth century.

In this heated context, it is remarkable that the royal cabinet falconry continued to exist until August 1792, funded from the public budget (*liste civile*) of the revolutionary state. Largely deprived of their practical functions for the king, twelve falconers, two stable boys, and an unspecified number of trained raptors and other animals continued to live and work in the small village of Montainville.[88] In November 1790, the Chevalier de Forget wrote a letter of thanks to the Master of the Hunt, Count Holstein, in Copenhagen for the gyrfalcons from Iceland that had been presented to the king the day before. Although, unfortunately, they could not be employed at present, due to the 'circumstances of the moment', he expressed his hope that this time of 'distress' would pass.[89] On 13 February 1791, Forget still had a public appearance as *capitaine de la fauconnerie du Cabinet du roi*, when received the gift falcons presented to King Louis XVI by the Grand Master of Malta.[90] And as late as in December 1791, when the relationship with the king had already deteriorated considerably, the new government still approved the payment of the 'customary indemnity' of 3,000 livres to the chevalier who had presented the gift falcons from Malta.[91]

After the outbreak of war with the allied European monarchs, however, the financing of the ruler's raptors was definitely out of the question. When the French monarchy collapsed on 10 August 1792, the closure of the falconry in Montainville also became a fact.[92] Whereas the remaining falconers and stablemen were awarded some compensation by the republican National Convention, the chevalier Jean-Claude III de Forget soon met a tragic fate. On 9 September

[86] Breittruck, *Ein Flügelschlag in der Pariser Aufklärung*, pp. 100–1.
[87] On Gilbert, his network, and their visions, see Serna, *Comme des bêtes*, pp. 185–93.
[88] See the dossier 'Pièces relatives aux Employes de la Fauconnerie demeurant à Montainville (Montfort de Lamaury)' (1792–3), BnF, site Arsenal, Fonds Forget, Ms 7889.
[89] Jean-Claude III de Forget to Count Holstein, Paris, 19 November 1790, no. 10, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.648, no. 10.
[90] *Gazette de France*, 22 February 1791, p. 69.
[91] See the list of expenditure of the administrator of the public treasury for the *affaires étrangères*, Paris, 6 June 1791, presented to the National Assembly on 11 December 1791, *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 36, p. 588.
[92] Pinoteau, *Les chasses de Louis XVI*, p. 174; Pieragnoli, *Le prince et les animaux*, p. 259.

1792, the last chief of the royal cabinet's falconry was massacred by an angry mob in Lyon. Forget's entire property was then confiscated by the state; years later, his brother Armand Claude appealed against this, though to no avail.[93]

Given the revolutionary dynamic that led to the creation of the First Republic, the end of the royal cabinet falconry in France in 1792 is not surprising. What is interesting to observe, however, is that the German princes also abolished their falconries, one after the other, during the same period. Already in July 1790, Duke Carl II August of Pfalz-Zweibrücken informed the Master of the Hunt, Count Hohlstein, in Copenhagen that he had abolished his falconry and therefore had no more use for falcons from Iceland.[94] In 1791, the once huge falconry in the Margraviate of Ansbach was closed, too, because the ruling dynasty, a branch of the House of Brandenburg, had died out. In October 1793, Emperor Francis II also followed the trend, and in August 1795, probably the last princely falconry in Germany, that at the court of Hesse-Kassel, definitively closed its doors.[95]

In this sequence of closures, the end of the proud imperial falconry in Laxenburg near Vienna came particularly abruptly. In 1793, the Laxenburg corps still comprised thirty-one members plus the *Obristfalkenmeister* and his secretary in the capital. During that year, there were the usual discussions about complaints from subjects about the damage caused by falconry or the acquisition of new gyrfalcons from the North, but also about reducing the salaries of the falconers and the possibility of dismissing some falconry boys.[96] Increased financial pressure, caused by the ongoing war, was thus a recurring motive in the last months of the imperial falconry and was also cited as a reason for its closure. On 10 October, the *Obersthofmeister* Johann Georg Adam Count Starhemberg put his signature to a decree informing the *Oberstfalkenmeister*, Count Saint Julien, that

> His Majesty takes little pleasure in the so-called heron hunts and the other hunts with the falcon, and the costs of this kind of amusement are not inconsiderable. Therefore, His Supreme Highness has decided to renounce this pleasure for the future and to dismiss the entire falconry from service.[97]

Saint Julien received orders to draft a plan how this dissolution might be handled quickly and how the compensation or new employments of the dismissed court

[93] He had served as captain of a cavalry regiment there. See BnF, site Arsenal, Fonds Forget, Ms 7879, dossier 'Claude Armand V[icom]te de Forget', and the official 'Acte de décès' issued by the revolutionary authorities with an overview of the confiscated goods in the same inventory.

[94] *Pfalzgraf* Carl to Count Holstein, Carlsberg, 11 July 1790, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.648, dossier 1790, no. 3. In the years before, the prince of the Duchy of Pfalz-Zweibrücken on the left bank of the Rhine had occasionally received falcons as gifts from Iceland.

[95] See the decree of Landgrave Ludwig IX of 13 August 1795 in HStAM, 5, 12800, fol. 198r.

[96] See the documents in HHStA HA OJäA 859, Fasz. 23 (1793).

[97] Imperial order, dated Vienna, 10 October 1793, signed by Starhemberg and Jörg von Volckra, in HHStA HA OJäA 859, Fasz. 23 (1793), no. 51.

falconers could be arranged, some of whom had served for more than forty years. Some of them wished to serve as hunters, stable staff, doorkeepers, chamber heaters, or personal lackeys for Emperor Francis II—or, in the case of Joseph Natterer mentioned at the very beginning of this book, became a custodian of a natural history cabinet.[98] When they left their quarters in Laxenburg in the spring of 1794 (now needed for the lodging of cadets), they were each awarded a pension of 30 guilders a year, some of which continued to be paid to them or their relatives until the 1840s.[99] This shows that the closure of the falconry at the Vienna Court was not solely prompted by cost savings, but also due to a reorientation of court life in times of turmoil.

At the European level, the decline of court falconry in Germany brought international falcon diplomacy to a definitive halt. After the emperor's court in Vienna had dropped out as a recipient, there were still fifteen falcons sent via Copenhagen from Iceland to Portugal and six to Hesse-Kassel; one white falcon and six grey gyrfalcons were destined for the Danish king's own use.[100] Thereafter, however, the trapping and distribution system came to a stop. Although a few Icelandic gyrfalcons were still delivered to Portugal and Russia in the following years, the falcon ship only set sail sporadically and ceased operations definitively in 1806. In the following year, 1807, the last two falcons died in the royal falconry in Copenhagen, which then also closed.[101] At this time, the Knights of Malta had long since been driven from their island (1798) and with them the customary tribute or gift of the Maltese falcons.

Isolated attempts to revive courtly falconry were short-lived. In France, Emperor Napoleon (1769–1821)—who made the eagle the emblem of his empire—revived many elements of Bourbon court life, including the stables and the royal hunts, with new pomp, but he gave no thought to falconry.[102] Only in 1810, his younger brother Louis Bonaparte (1778–1846), King of Holland since 1806, had the idea to send him a complete falconry equipage with six Dutch falconers and a number of birds as a gift, which then settled in Rambouillet.[103] The Emperor of the French, however, had little use for the trained raptors and even seems to have accidentally shot one of his falcons, which he took for a wild bird of prey, during

[98] See the 'Erklärung des aufgehobenen Falknereypersonals, welches sich aus ihren zu ferneren Dienten tauglich hält, und wo es Dienste zu erhalten wünsche' (1793), HHStA HA OJäA 859, Fasz. 23 (1793), no. 53, and the subsequent documents. A full list is provided in 'Supplementary Materials', Fig. 7, https://doi.org/10.48620/88108.

[99] See the documentation on the dismissed falconers in HHStA HA OJäA 859–60, which runs until 1847.

[100] 'Allerunderdanigst Repartitions Liste', Copenhagen, 26 October 1793, DNA, Rigsarkivet, 303 Overjægermesteren, 333.648, dossier 1793, no. 10.

[101] Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, p. 74.

[102] On the revival (and even enlargement) of the stables and the venery under Napoleon, see Mansel, *The Court of France*, pp. 101, 202, and later in more detail Vial, *Le grand veneur*; Vial, 'Les écuries de Napoléon'.

[103] Vial, *Le grand veneur*, pp. 321–2. My thanks go to Raphaël Devred for pointing out the short existence of a falconry in Rambouillet.

a hunt. After the Maréchal Louis-Alexandre Berthier (1753–1815) had stated that 'the falconry equipage is not large enough to correspond to the emperor's dignity and in no way contributes to His Majesty's pleasure', the 'Dutch falconry' was abolished again in spring 1812.[104]

Emperor Francis I of Austria, the former Holy Roman Emperor Francis II, also had no intention of restoring the old falconry when the Revolutionary Wars finally came to an end. If we can trust the colourful description of the event by the Count Auguste Louis Charles La Garde-Chambonas (1783–1853), a single falcon hunt was re-enacted during the Congress of Vienna. This hunt was staged in Laxenburg on 12 October 1814 in presence of the Austrian emperor and high-ranking foreign guests, some of whom were dressed in historical costumes, as a reminiscence of the ancient times of noble knights and their hawks: 'In the vicinity of that Gothic castle nothing could be more in harmony with the style of its construction than an amusement borrowed from the tradition and manners of the feudal ages.'[105] However, as the nineteenth century progressed, neither the Austrian emperors nor the other German rulers considered a return to these 'feudal ages' through a permanent establishment of a royal falconry.

This aftermath indicates that political upheavals and financial considerations alone cannot explain the sudden end of European courtly falconry in the 1790s. The rulers' loss of 'pleasure' in hunting with raptors also points to falconry's loss of function in a changing symbolic-political order. With only a slight delay, the negative image of birds of prey soon found its way into anti-revolutionary discourse. In the French translation of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, for instance, the philosophical supporters of the revolution were compared to birds of prey that always acted in isolation from each other and never travelled in groups.[106] This made it seem doubly inopportune for princes to associate themselves symbolically with the flying raptors, as their predecessors did. In the popular imagination, the hawks had become cruel and vain representatives of the vanished *ancien régime*, or even more distant feudal times, to which even kings, mindful of their reputation in the eyes of the bourgeois public, no longer wished to return (Figure 6.4).

Moreover, the whole system of transnational circulation associated with courtly falconry no longer corresponded to the new zeitgeist. In the decades around 1800, the remaining ruling dynasties were forced to reinvent themselves.[107] They now presented themselves less as transnationally interconnected

[104] Ibid., p. 322, quoting from a letter written by Berthier to Champagny, Paris, 4 February 1812.

[105] La Garde-Chambonas, *Anecdotal Recollections*, pp. 108–11, quote 108. Further descriptions of the event seem to be lacking, so this account, although revealing of the perception of falconry in the nineteenth century, should be treated with some caution.

[106] Burke, *Refléxions sur la révolution de France* (1790), p. 186. Interestingly, the metaphor of wild birds of prey is missing in the English original that was published in late 1789.

[107] This topic was the focus of a research project at Leiden University under the direction of Jeroen Duindam, which included a major conference in May 2022 entitled 'Monarchy in Turmoil. Princes,

B.B
BREVIERE
Cette vieille cour appartenait à un vieux Faucon qui n'avait pas grand' chose,
parce que les révolutions l'avaient ruiné ; mais, etc.

Figure 6.4 *An old falcon*, illustration by Jean Grandville (1803–1847) for Stahl's *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux* (Paris, 1842). The story that illustrates this image tells of an 'old falcon who no longer has much because the revolutions have ruined him'. Revelling in his memories of brilliant court life, the bird of prey also recalls a moment when he escaped the court for a week: 'Ah, I was the first falcon of France!' (p. 323)
Source: BnF Gallica, id. no. ark:/12148/btv1b86002022.

members of a European society of princes—even if they continued to be so to a certain extent—than as heads of their own nations. Accordingly, they also performed 'traditional' local hunting practices, supported by dogs and horses that

Courts, and Politics in Revolution and Restoration, 1780–1830'. See https://www.staff.universiteitleiden.nl/news/2021/04/cfp-monarchy-in-turmoil (April 2024).

now belonged to distinct national breeds. Thus, the Habsburg emperors of Austria now preferred to show themselves in Tyrolean hats in the mountains hunting chamois, surrounded by bearded hunters; while the kings and emperors in France—when in power—were eager to perform the *chasse à courre*, according to their national cultural heritage.[108] In Austria, Germany, or France, hunting with undomesticated falcons imported from distant lands did not fit this frame, nor did the hiring of foreign falconers.

Accordingly, the now royal Dutch House of Orange-Nassau was the only European dynasty to temporarily maintain a royal falconry at its palace Het Loo in the mid-nineteenth century, celebrated in texts and images as a renaissance of the ancient Dutch tradition of falconry and falcon training (Figure 6.5).[109] It was supported by British amateur members of the Royal Loo Hawking Club, which originated from the club 'The Confederate Hawks of Great Britain' founded in

Figure 6.5 The final act of a heron hunt in the park of Het Loo Palace, engraving by Johann Sonderland, 1843. While the technical procedure of the Royal Loo Hawking Club's falconry was modelled on eighteenth-century courtly practice, even the royal participants in the hunts were dressed in modern, bourgeois clothes

Source: Schlegel and Verster von Wulverhorst, *Traité de fauconnerie*, vol. 1, 1843/ Universitätsbibliothek Bern, MUE Holzer fol A 102.

[108] See Mathieu/Bachmann/Butz, *Majestätische Berge*, pp. 63–7, 78–85; Krethlow, ed., *Hofjagd*.

[109] The most enduring product of these activities was the beautifully illustrated two-volume work by Schlegel/Verster von Wulverhorst, *Traité de fauconnerie* (1844–53). On the Loo Falconry, which existed from 1839 to 1853, see Van der Wall, *The Loo Falconry*.

around 1770 on the initiative of Colonel Thomas Thornton (1751–1823)—probably the first modern falconry association based on bourgeois and noble members, who had recruited some of the dismissed court falconers from Valkenswaard during the revolutionary period.[110] Paradoxically, it was in the territory of a vanished early modern republic where the fading flare of courtly falconry—now redefined as an ancient national custom—was carried into the modern age.

Rulers and Raptors: Falcons in Courtly Europe, 1600–1793. Nadir Weber, Oxford University Press.
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[110] See Oorschot, *Vorstelijke vliegers*, pp. 212–19.

Epilogue

The Animal *Ancien Régime*

This study has offered a history of courtly Europe from a bird's eye view. We have followed the many transitional steps that turned wild falcons into royal hunting assistants and looked at the final heyday of falconry at European courts from the early seventeenth to the late eighteenth century. This concluding chapter places this history in its wider context. It first discusses the extent to which the observations of this case study reflect general characteristics of human–animal relations in early modern Europe. It then analyses how early modern European travellers described courtly falconry in other Eurasian empires—opening the field for a global history of early modern courtly falconry. Finally, it briefly traces the falcons' flights into the modern era, to see how they fit into a period in which the global ecosystem was increasingly shaped by human impact.

7.1 Animals and the Making of Royalty

As this book has shown, the most common modern classifications prove to be inaccurate to describe the place of falcons in early modern society. Within the span of their lifetime, they changed their status in relation to humans several times, from wild animal to captive animal and from there to tamed and trained animal—and sometimes back again. The relationship between rulers and raptors thus remained fragile overall. On the one hand, courts had to accept that falcons that had been acquired at great cost, and had been elaborately trained and nurtured, could take flight. On the other hand, many hunting falcons were also removed from the feeding list or killed because their performance was no longer worth the high costs in the eyes of their keepers. Though the sovereigns represented themselves and their falcons as a symbiotic pair on portraits and during hunts, they remained strangers to each other.

Escaping clear categorization as wild or domestic, working or companion animals, falcons are an extreme but still representative case of animal keeping practices in premodern Europe. As we have seen, game animals were first raised under human supervision before being released for the hunt, and many of the splendid horses that symbolically merged with their princely owners in courtly cavalcades

were later quietly sold to the knacker.[1] This back and forth between emotional closeness and utilitarian distance was not limited to the social context of the court. Peasants gave their cows individual names but also used them as living machines to be exploited to the last inch of their fur after death,[2] while bourgeois scientists conducted experiments on living dogs and cats, denying them souls and the ability to feel pain, but describing their behaviour in deeply anthropomorphic terms.[3] The more closely we follow the life traces of early modern animals, the more we see a culture of ambiguity.[4]

I propose to call this period in the history of human–animal relations the animal *ancien régime*. In this period, clerics and naturalists promoted the view of animals as creatures of God and subjects of Man.[5] Like the members of the different estates, the animals' position and character were considered fundamentally unchangeable. This may help to explain why the artificial creation of new 'races' was not promoted before the late eighteenth century and why 'bestiality' was considered a severe crime against religion and nature, punished by death for both humans and animals.[6] The absence of breeding experiments in the princely falconries can also be seen as an expression of this fundamentally static world view. For early modern observers, falcons represented noble, fierce, and independent beings who served the princes out of a natural inclination based on a world order created by God.

At the same time, human–animal relations in this period were shaped by a growing awareness of diversity.[7] The global exchange of animals through colonial expansion and trade, and the increased circulation of knowledge and expertise through printed books, brought a multitude of new species and uses to the attention of Europeans. This facilitated the emergence of new institutional settings such as the courtly menageries or stud farms and experimental uses of exotic animals such as cheetahs or trained cormorants for specific purposes such as hunting.[8] In the case of the Nordic gyrfalcon—a raptor that was already praised in medieval falconry treatises—it was not until the seventeenth century that a differentiated system of trapping monopolies and licences, of means of transportation, specialized markets, and a regular diplomatic gift exchanges developed, connecting numerous people and animals across the continent.

[1] Bayreuther, *Pferde und Fürsten*, pp. 253–74.
[2] Fudge, *Quick Cattle and Dying Wishes*; see also Raber, 'From Sheep to Meat'.
[3] Steinke, *Irritating Experiments*; Sahlins, *1668*, ch. VI.
[4] Von Thiessen, *Das Zeitalter der Ambiguität*.
[5] Baratay, *L'Église et l'animal*; Jardine/Secord/Spary, eds, *Cultures of Natural History*. This relates to visions of the society of orders; see Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Symbolische Kommunikation in der Vormoderne', pp. 507–12.
[6] Cáceres Mardones, *Bestialische Praktiken*; Nisly-Goretzki, 'Agricultural Intensification'.
[7] Keith, *Man and the Natural World*; Boehrer, 'Introduction: The Animal Renaissance'.
[8] Buquet, 'Hunting with Cheetahs'; Hengerer/Weber, eds, *Animals and Courts*; Pieragnoli, *La cour de France et ses animaux*.

Overall, the animal *ancien régime* in Europe, which reached its apogee in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was characterized by the preeminent role of the princely courts as focal points of human–animal relations. The royal residences were often the first places where exotic animals from overseas were admired, painted, and dissected.[9] The most beautiful and powerful horses and hunting dogs were looked after, trained, and crossbred in the princely stables and stud farms by the most renowned experts.[10] A wide range of more or less wild animals were kept as game in the princely parks and forests, some of which then established themselves in these areas in the longer term.[11] And a large number of domestic animals were bred on courtly model estates, destined for the princely table and subjected to the experiments in perfection reported by the physiocrats and other promoters of the Enlightenment.[12]

Animals were therefore also a visible part of a heterogeneous figuration that claimed to be a living metaphor and model for the wider society.[13] More than taming and domestication, this model emphasized the possibility of integration and cooperation between unequals, which manifested itself in an endless ceremonial staging involving a multitude of human and non-human actors. Practitioners such as Charles d'Arcussia did not regard falcons and other animals as mindless machines or as quasi-human companions following the same reason. Rather, it was a matter of making use of the animals' 'natural inclinations' for the sequences of actions prescribed for hunting and other scripted activities. By appealing to their falcons' 'interest' in physical integrity and fresh meat, and by establishing a common code of interspecies communication, courtly falconers acted as translators between princely demands and the animal point of view.

All these efforts resulted in a large-scale co-production that were aimed to entertain, but also to celebrate a hierarchical, God-given social order and its centre on earth, the sovereign, on whose position and resources the various co-performers depended.[14] Animals served as living symbols of the monarchical body, they extended its effect into space, and some of them even became a material part of it through consumption in ceremonial meals. Participating in royal entries and oath-taking ceremonies on the fist of their falconers, depicted in portraits as representatives of their sovereign, and symbolically dominating the skies with their public hunting flights, falcons made a significant contribution to the making of royalty in Baroque Europe.

[9] Findlen, 'Courting Nature'; Guerrini, *The Courtiers' Anatomists*; Sahlins, *1668*; Groom, *Exotic Animals*.

[10] Mulliez, *Les chevaux du royaume*.

[11] Weber, ed., *Hege und Herrschaft*.

[12] Saule/Arminjon, eds, *Sciences & curiosités*.

[13] Duindam, *Myths of Power*, p. 123; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, ch. 8.

[14] Stollberg-Rilinger, '*Honores regii*'; Stollberg-Rilinger, 'The Baroque State'; Krischer, 'Souveränität als sozialer Status'; Leferme-Falguières, *Les courtisans*; Horowski, *Das Europa der Könige*; Amsler/Weber, eds, *Im Schatten der Macht*.

After all, the legacy of the princely courts' pioneering role in redefining human–animal relations is mixed. In the case of falconry and its birds of prey, the complex system of capture, transport, integration, training, hunting, and all its translations into textual, visual, and material media collapsed with the end of the political *ancien régime*. In other groups of animals, such as the various breeds of dogs and horses, the courtiers' desire for handsome companions or skilful hunting assistants was translated more permanently into the animals' bodies, shaping the appearance and behaviour of their descendants to this day.[15]

7.2 Towards a Global Perspective

Some of the elements of the animal *ancien régime* may be considered specific to Western Europe. Thus, the abundance and variety of preserved pictorial and written records of court life—including courtly human–animal interactions—seems rather exceptional on a global scale.[16] Yet, in the longue durée, the similarities in the function and organization of princely courts compared with other regions of the Eurasian landmass and in Northern Africa are much more striking than the differences. These similarities can be explained partly by similar geographical, political, and social conditions, but they also reveal an intense exchange of people, texts, objects, and living animals in a globalizing early modern world.[17] These similarities were also noted by contemporary authors writing about the practice of falconry at the courts of non-European rulers. By combining early modern travelogues with secondary literature, this allows to situate the second golden age of falconry in Europe in its wider Eurasian context.[18]

In the seventeenth century, European travellers not only observed falconry in the 'Orient' as a well-known practice, but also took part in it, apparently without any difficulty. In his famous printed account of his diplomatic journey to Russia and Persia, the German scholar Adam Olearius (1599–1671) recorded several falcon hunts that the envoys of Duke Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorf attended. During their stay at the court of Tsar Mikhaíl Fyódorovich Románov in 1636, they were invited to a falcon hunt that took place 'on a merry meadow'.[19] In Astrakhan and Shamaki, local magnates honoured the envoys with falcon hunts,

[15] MacDonogh, *Reigning Cats and Dogs*; Russell, *Greyhound Nation*.

[16] See Duindam, *Dynasties*, p. 307.

[17] See Duindam/Artan/Kunt, eds, *Royal Courts*; Duindam, *Dynasties*, pp. 14, 303; and regarding hunting culture, Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, esp. pp. 268–73.

[18] This approach is inspired by Duindam, 'A Plea for Global Comparison', here esp. p. 319. See also the seminal works by Subrahmanyam, *Europe's India*, and Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East*.

[19] Olearius, *Beschreibung Der Newen Orientalischen Rejse* (1647), p. 107. On Olearius and his travel account, see Brancaforte, *Visions of Persia*, esp. pp. 8–21, and Baumann/Köster/Kuhl, eds, *Adam Olearius*; on the practice of falconry at the seventeenth-century Russian court, see Berelowitch, 'Chasse et rituel en Russie'.

too.[20] And after arriving at the court of Shah Safi I (r. 1629–42) in Isfahan, they were even invited to travel with the ruler on a hunting trip lasting several days, during which 'falcons were set on herons, cranes, ducks, and ravens, some of which they met in the field, and some of which they let fly themselves'.[21] In a mission marked by numerous accidents and misunderstandings, the shared practice of falconry proved to be a unifying element of courtly sociability.

This common ground allowed European authors to use familiar concepts when discussing the organization and practice of falconry at distant courts. In French descriptions of the Ottoman court, the *doghandjı̊-bashı̊* was referred to as the '*Grand fauconnier*', and both travellers and authors of hunting treatises noted that several hundred falconers *(doghandjı̊)* served the '*Grand Seigneur*' of the Turks (Figure 7.1).[22] The jewel trader Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605–1689) was also particularly impressed by the good behaviour and rich equipment of the sultan's falcons. Describing the magnificent falconry at the court of the Shah of Persia and its methods of training, he noted that the birds of prey were trained not only to chase herons and cranes, but also to attack large animals on the ground such as wild boars and gazelles.[23] Another traveller, François Bernier (1620–1688), provided the European public with some details of the falcon hunts for large cranes in Mughal India, some of which were conducted from riverboats.[24] Thus, the practice of falconry at the great courts of the East seemed similar enough to be described in European terms, and at the same time different enough to be admired and learned from.

Interest in the practice and presentation of courtly falconry was mutual. In 1679, the Jesuit Ludovico Buglio (1606–1682) wrote a *Treatise on Hawks* (進呈鷹說, *Jincheng yingshuo*) in Chinese for the Kangxi Emperor, which was largely based on Aldrovandi's *Ornithologia* and subsequently found its way into other Chinese printed works.[25] In both Mughal India and Imperial China, inspiration from naturalistic European animal painting was blended with local aesthetic traditions

[20] Olearius, *Beschreibung Der Newen Orientalischen Rejse* (1647), pp. 244, 250–1, 304, 375.

[21] Ibid., pp. 400–5, quote p. 400.

[22] See, e.g., Tavernier, *Les six voyages*, vol. 6 ([1676], Rouen 1724 edn), pp. 175–80; Sélincourt, *Le parfait chasseur* (1683), p. 310. The *doghandji*, who were originally responsible for catching and training birds of prey, formed a group of privileged officeholders that numbered several thousand in the various provinces. The *doghandjı̊-bashı̊* was only one of several chief falconers in charge and had quarters at Topkapı Palace, where he was in the command of some forty falconers. See İnalcık, '*Doghandjı̊*'; Lewis, 'Čakı̊rdjı̊-Bashı̊.

[23] Tavernier, *Les six voyages*, vol. 2 ([1676], 1724 edn), p. 25, and vol. 6, pp. 177–8. On the history of falconry in Persia, see A'lam, 'Bāzdārī'; Daryaee/Malekzadeh, 'Falcons and falconry in pre-modern Persia'.

[24] Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire* ([1670/1], 1891 edn), p. 377. On the practice and representation of falconry in Mughal India, see Ur Rahman, *The Art of Falconry in the Mughal Empire*.

[25] See De Troia, 'Ludovico Buglio's JINCHENG YINGSHUO'. On falconry at the court of the Kangxi Emperor, see Spence, *Emperor of China*, pp. 8 and 179–80; on the symbolic place of falconry under Quianlong, Zheng, 'Animals as Wonders', pp. 224–6; on the organization of the imperial falconry under the Qing, Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, p. 546, no. 7336, and p. 576, no. 7888. I am indebted to Nadine Amsler for valuable references on falconry in imperial China.

Figure 7.1 *Dogangi Falconer of the Grand Seigneur*, hand-coloured etching, Paris, 1778. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, about forty falconers *(doghandji)* served directly at the Ottoman court in Constantinople and accompanied the ruler on falcon hunts in the surrounding countryside. Despite the exotic representation of their clothing, the structure of courtly falconry appeared familiar to European observers

Source: *Recueil des différents costumes des principaux Officiers et Magistrats de la Porte et des peuples sujets de l'Empire Ottoman*, Paris, Onfroy, 1778/BnF Gallica, id. no. ark:/12148/btv1b105073085.

to effectively portray the royal raptors (Figures 7.2 and 7.3).[26] At the same time, Western European artists such as the Dutch landscape painter Willem Schellinks (1623–1678) were guided by Indian pictorial models when they depicted the spectacular hunts at foreign courts, known from travelogues, for their curious European public (Figure 7.4).[27] During the early modern period, falconry thus still served, both through its practice and in its representations, as a powerful, universally readable 'image vehicle' among Eurasian courts for a ruler's claims to socio-political supremacy and territorial control.[28]

The extent to which the lives of the falcons differed at the various Eurasian courts is difficult to assess. It seems clear, however, that the courtly raptors usually shared the mobile life courses. Apart from Tokugawa Japan, where some of the 'blue' goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis fujiyamae*) favoured for the hunt seem to have been raised under semi-domestic conditions,[29] there is no evidence of the breeding of birds of prey for hunting purposes. Rather, like in Europe, the raptors were caught in the wild and brought to the courts by various routes. Like in Western Europe, falcons were carried as gifts during diplomatic missions between the empires of the Middle and Far East, and great rulers such as the Ottoman Sultan or the Emperor of China regularly received birds of prey as tribute from dependent territories.[30] Premodern Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and Japanese falconry treatises also point to a highly specialized knowledge about keeping, healing, and training birds of prey—which, in the case of medieval Arabic falconry treatises, contributed significantly to the development of falconry in Western Europe.[31]

As in Western Europe, falcons at Asian courts were richly endowed and personalized. European travellers frequently noted how the falcons were cherished by Eastern rulers. In Isfahan, for example, the Persian Shah's falcons lived in a magnificent falcon house called *Kusch-châneh*, each of them being looked after

[26] On the Chinese–European exchange of images, see Musillo, *The Shining Inheritance* (who, however, does not discuss Castiglione's famous falcon portraits in detail), on the falcon portraits at the Mughal court, Ur Rahman, *The Art of Falconry in the Mughal Empire*, pp. 2–10. Numerous images of falconry in different regions of the world are collected in the two-volume work by Grimm, ed., *Raptor on the Fist*.

[27] See Brinkmann et al., eds, *Rembrandt's Orient*, pp. 44–8, 276–7.

[28] Hadjinicolaou, 'Macht wie die Macht des Königs'; Hadjinicolaou, 'Cura publica'.

[29] See Mizuno, 'A Symbol of Power', p. 969. However, Otsuka, 'Falconry', pp. 199–200; Fukuda, 'Characteristics of Japanese Falconry', point out that falconry in early modern Japan was also based primarily on the import and the capture of wild birds of prey.

[30] See Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, pp. 246–51; Reindl-Kiel, 'Dogs, Elephants, Lions'; Newby, *The Empire and the Khanate*, p. 45. On Russian falcon diplomacy in the seventeenth century, see Shergalin, 'Gyrfalcon Trappers'; for evidence of falcon gifts in the Mughal Empire, Ur Rahman, *The Art of Falconry in the Mughal Empire*, pp.76–7, 80–1, 90–1.

[31] See Van den Abeele, *Der Wiener Moamin*. On medieval Arab falconry treatises, see Möller, *Studien zur mittelalterlichen arabischen Falknereiliteratur*; on the Persian treatises, of which only a small part has survived, A'lam, 'Bāzdārī', A'lam, 'Bāz'; on the less numerous Chinese falconry treatises, see De Troia, 'Ludovico Buglio's JINCHENG YINGSHUO', pp. 156–7; on Japanese treatises, Nihonmatsu, 'Japanese Books on Falconry'.

Figure 7.2 *Emperor Jahangir Hunting with Hawks*, single-page painting mounted on a detached album folio, Mughal style, seventeenth century. In the seventeenth century, the Mughal rulers commissioned numerous images of courtly hunts and portraits with falcons, which combined Asian and Arabic pictorial traditions with European influences in portraiture and landscape painting. Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605–27) also mentions several falcon hunts in his personal chronicles
Source: The Trustees of the British Museum, no. 264739001.

Figure 7.3 A white falcon, painted by Giuseppe Castiglione/Láng Shìníng, hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, 1765. The Italian Jesuit Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766) served as court painter and architect at the Imperial Court in Beijing for several decades. While he depicted the falcon according to the naturalistic conventions of European animal painting, the framing, executed by Yao Wenhan, follows Chinese aesthetics. The white falcon—most probably a gyrfalcon—had been sent to the Qianlong Emperor as a tribute by the ruler of the Khanate of Khoqand, Irdana Bey

Source: National Palace Museum, Beijing, K2A000957N000000000PAA.

Figure 7.4 Willem Schellinks, *Hunting Scene with Shah Jahan and his Sons*, oil on canvas, *c.*1660–75. The painting shows the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan on a falcon hunt in high flight, in a pose comparable to the portraits of contemporary European rulers. In contrast, the (fictional) combat between an elephant and a rhinoceros in the background has a distinctly exoticizing quality
Source: Orientalist Museum, Doha/RKDimages, no. 197608.

by an individual caretaker and regularly taken out for strolls in the gardens, the German travelling scholar Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716) reported.[32] His precursor Olearius had also described a special tower erected by Shah Abbas I on a hill close to the town of Naṭanz in memory of one of his favourite falcons who had attacked and defeated an eagle of her own initiative.[33] In several accounts, such anecdotes about beloved falcons were contrasted with the uncompromising treatment of people by the same rulers.[34] Overall, however, the admiration for the

[32] Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum exoticarum* (1712), pp. 53–4, 83, 132.
[33] Olearius, *Beschreibung Der Newen Orientalischen Rejse* (1647), p. 375. According to Persian sources, the monument was a mausoleum for a falcon named Navand ('the valiant'). See Aʿlam, 'Bāzdārī'.
[34] Several authors reported about a beloved white falcon of Abbas I that had fallen ill, whereupon the ruler had threatened the falcon master with death. However, the intervention of a court fool had averted the worst. See Chardin, *Voyages*, vol. 8 (1711), pp. 244–5; Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum exoticarum* (1712), pp. 295–6.

Eastern courts, whose splendour was reflected not least in their magnificent falconry and the well-being of their birds, prevailed.

The overall picture that emerges is of an early modern pan-Eurasian courtly culture of falconry which, despite all the differences in technique, ceremonial embedding, and animal care, had fundamental similarities. A glance at the available secondary literature gives the impression that, as in Western Europe, the rulers of the great Asian empires did not simply continue an ancient practice but pushed courtly falconry towards greater ceremonial formalization and professionalization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the exchange with Europe, the associated ideas of power in the third dimension were also disseminated through new visual and, as in China, sometimes printed media. It was not only travelling diplomats, but also the large captive gyrfalcons that constantly moved from Russia to the courts of the Ottoman and Persian empires, or—occasionally—from Iceland via Copenhagen to North Africa, that linked these ostentatious hunting cultures and made this high flight of courtly falconry possible.

It was only during the revolutionary period that the European perception of falconry in the Middle and Far East visibly changed from a medium of 'inclusive Eurocentrism' to one of exoticization and symbolic degradation.[35] With a mixture of ethnographic curiosity, irony, and disdain, the French cavalry officer Gaspard Drouville (1783–1856), for example, described, in his travel account first published in 1819, that 'the Persians love hunting very much, so much so that they spend several weeks or even months on it.' Fascinated by a practice that, according to the author, was very different from hunting in Europe, he described in detail the course of the princely falcon hunts from horseback and reproduced the critical view of the French natural history of the Enlightenment on the relationship between ruler and falcon, stating that 'voracity rather than attachment brings falcons to the fist of their master.'[36] Accordingly, falconry became a popular subject for Orientalist painting in Europe (Figure 7.5).[37]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1913, the American writer William Coffin finally noted that falconry in Europe existed 'only as a fad of a few medieval-minded sportsmen, [whereas] in the East, where the art of falconry perhaps originated, it flourishes still'.[38] Thus, in the eyes of Western observers, the continued falcon hunts in Arab and Asian territories no longer appeared as a sign of the superior richness and power of their rulers, as in the Baroque age, but rather as another colourful illustration of the alleged backwardness and decadence of 'the Orient'—similar to their exotic vision of the European Middle Ages, which only now became the definitive golden age of European

[35] On this terminology, see Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East*, p. 489.
[36] Drouville, *Voyage en Perse*, vol. 2 ([1819], 1825 edn), pp. 32–3.
[37] See MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, pp. xx, 56.
[38] Quoted after Macdonald, *Falcon*, p. 106.

Figure 7.5 Eugène Fromentin, *Chasse au Héron*, oil on canvas, 1865. For representatives of nineteenth-century European Orientalism, falconry was a favourite motif for representing the foreignness and alleged backwardness of Arab societies
Source: Domaine de Chantilly, Musée Condé, inv. no. PE528/RMN-Grand Palais, photo by René-Gabriel Ojeda.

falconry (Figure 7.5).[39] The fact that in the meantime many 'oriental rulers' had already turned away from falconry and preferred hunting with shotguns hardly mattered for this self-referential discourse.[40] At the height of Western imperialism, the mutual legibility of the power symbolism associated with falconry, which had once gone hand in hand with a pan-Eurasian animal *ancien régime*, had definitely broken down.

7.3 Flying into the Anthropocene

As this book has shown, falconry played an important role in shaping courtly life and staging rulership in many regions. However, it had only little effect on the

[39] On the exotic Middle Ages as an analogous foil to Western European modernity, which at the same time reflects a search for the natural and the authentic, see Groebner, *Das Mittelalter hört nicht auf*, p. 125; Groebner, *Retroland*, pp. 64–74.

[40] In Persia, Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (r. 1848–96), for example, showed little interest in falcon hunts, which he found unnecessarily expensive and which he therefore greatly reduced: see Aʿlam, 'Bāzdārī'. In Japan, court falconry and the corresponding purchase system were abolished in 1866: see Fukuda, 'Characteristics of Japanese Falconry', p. 94.

survival and biological evolution of birds of prey before 1800. Thus, as argued in the first chapter, population trends in rock ptarmigan were for a long time more important in determining the ups and downs of gyrfalcons in Iceland than the demands of the European courts. It is true that an over-exploitation could cause local populations of breeding raptors and game animals to collapse, as, for example, in Japan in the 1590s due to a rapid upswing of falconry under Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598).[41] Yet in Japan and elsewhere, this was usually quickly countered with the creation of enclosed parks, conservation areas, and hunting bans.[42] Moreover, the grasp of human societies on unsettled areas remained extremely limited so that it could hardly affect the overall evolution of the highly mobile birds of prey that breed in rather isolated places. This balance in favour of the falcons only began to shift when massive human population growth began worldwide, and industrial agriculture destroyed or poisoned the basic food resources of these fast-flying hunters.

There is currently no consensus in interdisciplinary research on when exactly the much-discussed Age of the Anthropocene began.[43] In historiography, the concept emerging from climate research has been welcomed as an impulse to understand the human species as part of a world ecosystem and to no longer separate the history of human societies from natural history—although, at the same time, some scepticism about this large-scale interpretation prevails.[44] From the viewpoint of animal history, I would argue for the possibility of several overlapping periodization schemes, depending on the moment when human co-presence became a dominant factor in the evolution of a certain species or population.[45] In the case of falcons and many other non-domesticated species, this point was not reached until the nineteenth century.

The history of falcon–human relationships in the modern era has been marked by several spectacular turning points, which have always resulted in a greater direct and indirect human impact on the history of the various raptor species.[46] In the nineteenth century, wild birds of prey became the subject of targeted extermination campaigns in Europe and North America. Rewards were offered for dead falcons and park rangers were ordered to destroy their eyries and shoot the rivals of small game hunters and enemies of pigeon breeders and farmers. Even in Iceland, where the white gyrfalcon was on its way to becoming a national symbol,

[41] See Fukuda, 'Characteristics of Japanese Falconry'; Fukuda, 'Early Modern Hawking Grounds'.

[42] Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History*, pp. 34–51, 96–118; Quenet, 'Parks in der longue durée'.

[43] For an overview on the debates in the natural sciences, see Ellis, *Anthropocene*, and for history of science perspective, Bonneuil/Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*.

[44] The debate was launched by Dibesh Chakrabarty's seminal article 'The Climate of History: Four Theses' in 2009 and is particularly intense among environmental historians. See, for example, Emmet/Lekan, eds, *Whose Anthropocene?*

[45] This would bring the concept closer to that of coevolution. For a discussion of the Anthropocene from an animal history perspective, see also Guerrini, 'Deep History'.

[46] For the following, see Macdonald, *Falcon*, chs 4–6.

a law was passed by parliament in 1888 that gave every farmer the right to shoot such raptors at any time.[47] Moreover, collecting the eggs of rare birds became fashionable, which made reproduction for birds of prey even more difficult.

The revival of falconry after the First World War, which led to the founding of associations such as the Deutscher Falkenorden (1921) and the British Falconry Association (1927),[48] initially brought additional pressure on wild raptor populations, because young birds were taken from their nests. But after a while, the rebirth of falconry contributed significantly to birds of prey being perceived more positively. As representatives of a romantic, untamed nature and at the same time of a centuries-old cultural tradition, they became protected species in some Western countries. The massive population collapse of wild falcons from the 1940s onwards—caused by chemical pesticides such as DDT—was therefore perceived as all the more dramatic. Following the publication of Rachel Carson's pathbreaking book *Silent Spring* (1962) and John Alec Baker's nature writing classic *The Peregrine* (1967), the threatened falcons became an icon for the emerging ecological movement.

Another turnaround came when the Peregrine Fund, established in 1970, succeeded in breeding falcons in captivity and placing them in abandoned eyries. In the following decades, falcon populations—which have been statistically recorded since then—slowly but constantly recovered. In the 1980s, transmitters made it possible to record the migration routes of peregrine falcons, about which early modern naturalists had only been able to speculate. However, the greatly increased visibility of the life histories of wild falcons also shows that the interim triumph of conservation may represent a Pyrrhic victory; on a global scale, raptor populations have once again come under substantial pressure in recent years due to the use of pesticides in agriculture, pollution from waste, unsecured power lines, and the increasing disappearance of their prey.[49]

As they faced extinction as a wild species, the falcons transformed into pets. Due to the ban on captures in the wild and thanks to the use of antibiotics and sophisticated breeding methods, the domestication of falcons became possible in the 1970s. Most birds kept by falconers today have thus evolutionarily been separated from their wild counterparts.[50] Like pedigree dogs and other pets since the nineteenth century, these domestic falcons and hawks have been subjected to detailed breeding standards and been artificially selected for aesthetic or practical hunting reasons. Thus, the centuries-long dispute among premodern falconry authors as to whether the gyrfalcon or the saker falcon deserved first place in the hierarchy was unceremoniously resolved with the breeding of gyr-saker hybrids.

[47] Ægisson, *Icelandic Trade with Gyrfalcons*, pp. 80–1. For Britain, see Lovegrove, *Silent Fields*, pp. 130–7.

[48] Hewicker, 'The History of the *Deutscher Falkenorden*'.

[49] For a recent overview, see Sarasola/Grande/Negro, eds, *Birds of Prey*.

[50] Heinrich, 'Are Trained Raptors Domesticated Birds?', esp. pp. 281–2. On the methods of falcon breeding, see Weaver/Cade, eds, *Falcon Propagation*, esp. pp. 24–33.

Fitted with tracking devices to enable falconers to locate them, these domestic falcons are used to attack birds out of fast-moving cars or are simply kept as companion animals that are taken out for flights from time to time.[51] At the same time, falcons are once again being used as working animals, chasing pigeons and seagulls away from city centres, keeping airspace clear for aircraft at airports, and attacking military drones.

For these reasons, narratives that emphasize the millennia-old continuity of the human–falcon relationship must be put into perspective. Although there may be a continuous practice of capturing and training birds of prey in some rural areas of Central Asia, falconry as it is practised in most places today is largely the result of a reinvention as a sport and breeding method in the course of the twentieth century. In countries of the Arabian Peninsula, too, falconry has only been rediscovered and propagated as a national sport since the 1970s.[52] In 2010, following the initiative of the United Arab Emirates, the supposedly 'unbroken tradition' of falconry was declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, with a growing number of participating states.[53] In this context, the birds of prey not only became popular subjects in literature and film, they also once again became a medium of political representation and diplomatic exchange.[54] But even though the poses of the political decision-makers with raptors on their fist may at first sight resemble each other, the animals and their representations belong to a world entirely different from that of the golden age of Eurasian courtly falconry.

Joseph Natterer's stuffed white gyrfalcons, now in the Natural History Museum in Vienna, should therefore not be seen as objects of unspoilt nature, nor as examples of an unbroken tradition of falconry, but as witnesses and agents of a vanished courtly culture and its animals. From the late sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, falcons enabled expanding princely courts to extend into the sky. Praised as marvellous creatures with a supposedly natural inclination to serve their human masters, they performed their roles before an astonished courtly public and made dynastic ambitions take flight. They were bought for high prices, carefully cared for, rigorously trained, richly rewarded for their hunts, and finally portrayed or stuffed after death. Although their lives were usually short, their traces bear witness to a Baroque courtly culture that constantly crossed the boundaries of territories, classes, and species to stage the great *theatrum mundi*.

Rulers and Raptors: Falcons in Courtly Europe, 1600–1793. Nadir Weber, Oxford University Press.
© Nadir Weber 2025. DOI: 10.1093/9780198937364.003.0008

[51] See, e.g., the anthropological study by Schroer, 'On the Wing'.

[52] Wakefield, 'Falconry as heritage'; Exell/Rico, eds, *Cultural Heritage in the Arabian Peninsula*, esp. pp. 42, 88–90; Al Bowardi et al., 'Falconry in the United Arab Emirates'.

[53] See https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/falconry-a-living-human-heritage-01708 (16 January 2024). The quote can be found on p. 3 of the attached nomination file no. 01708 from 2021.

[54] See, e.g., Tom Parfitt, 'The diplomacy behind Putin's gyrfalcon present simply doesn't fly', *The Times*, 2 November 2019. On the *longue durée* of animal diplomacy, see Weber, 'Lebende Geschenke'; Weber, 'Diplomatic History'.

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